Shi'i Islam in North America

United states of America & Canada



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ISBN-13: 978-0-615-28429-3
ISBN-10: 0-615-28429-9



ISIC

International Society for Iranian Culture

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May 2012

Cover Design
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Contents

Introduction		4
Chapter One	The Origins of the North American Shi'i Community	7
Chapter Two	The Challenges and Visions of the North American Shi'i Community	47
Chapter Three	Responses from the Community	99
Chapter Four	Leadership in the Shi'i Community	218
Chapter Five	Shi'i Outreach Activities in North America	262
Appendix		306

Introduction

Most discussions about Islam in North America have focused on Sunni Muslims neglecting, thereby, the experience of Shi'i Muslims. Those who restrict their study to this monolithic and generalized analysis of Muslims in North America tend to ignore the nuances that characterize and differentiate the diverse Muslim segments in North America. The 'generalized approach' also assumes that all Muslims groups undergo a similar experience in North America.

This monolithic view has obscured the proper recognition and understanding of the religious experience of a significant religious minority, the Shi'i Muslims. Hence, a study of the Shi'i experience in North America is long overdue.

This study will examine various facets of Shi'ism in the North American context. More specifically, it will discuss the early history of the North American Shi'i community, the diverse Shi'i groups, the establishment of Shi'i centers and some of the challenges confronting the Shi'i community. The study has been divided along the following lines:

The first chapter study will trace the origins of Shi'ism in North America and the religious and cultural experience of the early Shi'i community. In discussing the matrix of forms through which the culture of the different Shi'i groups is expressed, the chapter will show that far from being a monolithic group, the Shi'i community comprises a mosaic of diverse ethnic and cultural groups that have settled in North America. The chapter will then

compare the diverse Shi'i communities from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, and the Khoja Shi'is in North America.

The second chapter will use surveys and on-site interviews to examine how members of the Shi'i community have engaged the challenges of cultural negotiations, re-definitions, and re-appropriation of a different culture, and how they have pursued different ways to adapt to the North American milieu. The chapter will also argue that the ethnic characterization of Shi'i Islam reflects the pluralistic North American ambience and the part played by religious minorities in shaping North American social pluralism.

The chapter will also examine the composition of the Shi'i community in North America, some of the key challenges confronting it, and some of its visions and aspirations for the future.

Chapter three will cite the responses from various Shi'i centers. In particular, it will examine the ethnic composition of the centers, the genres of programs held, and the challenges and future aspirations of the centers.

The fourth chapter will assess the impact of the imported Shi'i heritage on the definition of Shi'ism in the North American context. It will also look at the functions and views of some North American '*ulama*' and the challenges they encounter as the religious guides of the North American Shi'i community. The chapter will also examine how the events of September 11, 2001 have impacted the Shi'i community and its renewed interaction with the wider North American community. What changes have

occurred within the Shi'i community since September 11? How have the events of September 11, 2001 have impacted the Shi'i community in North America?

The final chapter will examine some of the outreach and proselytization (*da'wa*) activities of the Shi'i community in North America. It will also examine the reasons why Islam is the fastest growing religion in North America and the implications this has for the Shi'i community. The chapter will also depend on a survey conducted to examine why African-Americans are attracted to Shi'ism and the Shi'i community's interaction with the African-American community. The results of the surveys and list of centers are appended at the end of the study.

Many individuals have helped us in this project, too many to list individually. So, we hope they will excuse us for not mentioning them by name. However, we would like to thank various centers for their help and assistance, and the '*ulama*' and community leaders throughout North America for their cooperation in completing this project.

Chapter One

The Origins of the North American Shi'i Community

In the classical period of Islam, Muslim jurists divided the world into the realms of belief and unbelief - *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-kufr*. It was assumed that Muslims would live in *dar al-Islam* and, if they ventured into *dar al-kufr*, it would be on a temporary basis for specific purposes like commercial ventures or trade. A Muslim residing permanently in *dar al-kufr* was deemed to be abnormal and often frowned upon.[1] Most of the discussions in classical Muslim juridical literature reflect this majority standpoint, i.e., that Muslims were living in a country where they were in the majority.

Significantly, even in the contemporary era, much of the literature that is in circulation in Muslim circles reflects the 'majority status' position. Titles such as 'Islam and economics,' 'Islam and the State,' 'The role of the *Shari'a* in a Muslim country' assume that the reader is residing where Muslims are in a majority rather than in a minority status. It is therefore correct to state that much of the discussion is not directly germane to Muslims living as a religious minority group in North America. It is probably due to this that Muslims living in North America today have few guidelines or precedents to follow. This is because Islam in North America is a relatively new phenomenon.

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[1] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 32. See also Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 41.

The twentieth-century witnessed a dramatic increase in the migration of Muslims to the American shores. The increased presence and visibility of Muslims in America means that Islam is no longer to be characterized as a Middle Eastern or South Asian phenomenon. Given the fact that it is the fastest growing religion in America, Islam is now a very American phenomenon. As we will discuss, the Muslim presence in America is on the increase. Hence the familiar categorization of 'Islam and the West' should be reformulated to read 'Islam in the West.' As Islam becomes an integral part of the religious landscape of the West and Muslims become a visible and vocal part of the fabric of North American society, the familiar characterization of Islam as 'the other' is slowly attenuated.

Many scholars who study the phenomenon of North American Islam tend to homogenize North American Muslims. They have focused primarily on Sunni Muslims, neglecting, thereby, the experience of Shi'i Muslims.[2] As a matter of fact, it is correct to state that even in academic discourses and classes, most studies equate Islam in North America with Sunnism. Those who restrict their study to this generalized analysis of Muslims in North America tend to ignore the nuances that characterize and differentiate the diverse Muslim segments in North America. As we will see in this study, there are different ethnic and cultural divisions within the Shi'i community too.

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[2] In this study, the term Shi'is is used to refer to Twelver Shi'is only. Therefore it excludes other Shi'i groups like the Zaydis, Bohra and the Agha Khani Isma'ilis.

This chapter will examine the early history and genesis of Shi'i Muslims in North America. The problems of ethnicity and the challenges confronting Shi'i Muslims will be dealt with in later chapters. It is important to note that the discussion of the origins of Shi'ism in North America has to be contextualized within the broader framework of the experience of the early Sunni Muslims in America. This is because, in many cases, Shi'is and Sunnis arrived at the same time, worshipped together, shared similar experiences, and encountered the same challenges. As a matter of fact, in the early years of the twentieth century, it was the Islamic, rather than sectarian identity of Muslims that was stressed. Hence, despite their sectarian differences, Shi'i and Sunni Muslims often worked together to combat the challenges they encountered. They often intermarried, worshipped in the same mosques and together represented Islam to the non-American community. Our study on early Muslim settlers in America suggests that many of them were not even aware of the sectarian differences that existed between them. Thus, the discussion of origins of the Shi'is in North America will be prefaced with a discussion of Sunni Muslims in America.

Scholars have differed as to how many Muslims there are in America. A conservative figure would be around seven million. However, it must be noted that this is a rough estimate. One attempt to categorize and count Muslim Americans put African Americans at 42 percent, South Asians at 24.4 percent, Arabs at 12.4 percent, Africans at 6.2 percent, Iranians at 3.6 percent, South-east Asians at 2 percent, European Americans at 1.6 percent, and "others" at 5.4

percent.[3]

The Early Muslims in America

Some scholars have argued that Muslims arrived here almost two centuries before the time of Christopher Columbus in 1492. These Muslims are reported to have come from Spain and the northwestern coast of Africa and landed at both South and North America. They may even have been among the members of Columbus' own crew. Scholars have argued that African Muslim explorers intermarried with Native Americans and even introduced some arts and crafts to the Americas.[4] However, a word of caution is in order. Evidence to support such claims, cited from artifacts, inscriptions and eyewitness accounts, is circumstantial and, at this point, inconclusive. Further research work is necessary to determine the authenticity of such reports.

The earliest available record of Muslims in America dates back to the sixteenth century. Estevan, a black Moroccan guide and interpreter, is said to have arrived in America with a Spanish expedition in 1527.[5] We do not have definitive data on the Muslim community in America after this period. However, the composition of the American Muslim community changed dramatically with the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century.

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[3] Karen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russell Sage, 2003), 4.

[4] Jane Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 50.

[5] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1997), 11-12.

Islam had spread to West Africa by the tenth century. Later on, Muslims established centers of learning in places like Timbuktu. Mansa Musa (d. 1332), a Muslim king in Mali, is famed for his riches and for importing Muslim scholars to his country. Besides Mali, there were significant Muslim communities present in various other West African cities.[6]

When the slave trade started, many of these Muslims were forcibly brought to the American shores. In fact, around ten to fifteen percent of the slaves brought from West Africa were reportedly Muslims. Kunta Kinte, the famous slave abducted from his village Juffure, Gambia, is known to have been a Muslim.

Slave registers contain names of several Muslim figures, many of whom became famous. These include figures such as 'Umar b. Sa'id, Bilali, 'Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima, Job Solomon, Lamine Kaba, Yarrow Momout, and many others. Details of many of these early Muslims and their struggle to maintain their Islamic and African identity have been preserved.[7] In fact, by the eighteenth century, there was a large group of Muslim slaves in America. A discussion of these early Muslims and their struggle to be liberated remains beyond the scope of this study. It is important to note, however, that there is no record indicating that there were any Shi'as among these Muslims. In all probability, this is because, in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, Shi'ism had not spread to the West African coast.

Although there were Muslims among the Africans brought to

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6 Ibid., 18-19.

7 Ibid., Chapter One.

the United States as slaves, the religion did not survive the slavery era. Various reasons can be cited for this. Some slaves were forcibly converted to Christianity, whereas others returned to Africa after slavery was abolished. Many Muslims were assimilated to the dominant American Protestant culture. Another reason why Islam did not survive the African-American slavery was the fact that there were few Muslim women who survived the journey to America. Hence, Muslim slaves either did not marry or married Christian women who did not transmit Islam to their children. Furthermore, one way that a religious community perpetuates its tradition is through the building of institutions. As Muslim slaves could not afford to construct mosques or places of worship, they were not able to perpetuate and transmit their beliefs and practices to future generations. Paradoxically, soon after slavery ended in 1865, Islam resurfaced in America in the form of immigrants from the Middle East.

Muslim migration to America occurred in a series of distinguishable periods or waves. The first wave was between 1875 and 1912. These early Muslims came from rural areas of what was then called Greater Syria, living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Most immigrants were relatively uneducated men; they found work in factories and mines or worked as peddlers. Many of these immigrants from the Middle East were Christians; however, a small percentage was comprised of Sunnis, Shi'is, 'Alawis, and Druze.[8]

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[8] Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York: Oxford, 1987), 13-14.

Many Muslims migrated as they were fleeing conscription into the Turkish army, which, in their view, was not connected to their aspirations or national identities. Other Muslims were emulating Christians who returned from the United States with considerable wealth. Another reason for the early migration was that the onset of World War I brought such devastation to Greater Syria that many people were forced to flee to survive.

The second wave of migrants came at the end of World War I, after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled most of the Muslim Middle East. It also coincided with Western colonial rule under the mandate system in the Middle East. Many people coming to America during this second wave comprised of relatives of earlier Muslims who had emigrated and established themselves to some degree in this country.[9] These Muslims hoped to emulate their predecessors.

The third wave, from 1930 to 1938, was primarily made up of relatives of previous Arab immigrants, Muslims from not only the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East but also from South Asia, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and other places. The fourth wave, which lasted from 1947 to 1960, saw considerable expansion in the sources of immigration. The Nationality Act of 1953 gave each country an annual quota of immigrants. Muslims came now not only from the Middle East but also from many parts of the world including India and Pakistan (after the partitioning of the subcontinent in 1947), Eastern Europe (mainly from Albania and Yugoslavia), and the Soviet Union. Most of these arrivals

[9] Smith, *Islam in America*, 52.

settled in large cities such as Chicago and New York. Unlike their earlier counterparts, many of these immigrants were urban in background and well educated, and some were members of the families of former ruling elites. They came to the United States hoping to continue their education or receiving advanced technical training.[10] Many immigrants in this fourth wave were urban elites seeking better education and better opportunities, whereas some were refugees who fled adverse political circumstances in their home countries.

In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson signed an immigration act repealing the quotas based on national diversity within the United States and reversed the historic preference for European immigrants. Immigration from Europe thus declined, while that from the Middle East and Asia increased dramatically. In fact, more than half of the newcomers were Muslims. The fifth wave, which began in 1967, was in response to the U.S. Immigration and the Naturalization Act of 1965. The disastrous defeat of Arab troops at the hands of Israel in 1967 initiated an exodus of Palestinians headed for the West. Over the last several decades, political turmoil in many countries of the Muslim world has occasioned increased emigration.

The Migration of Shi'is to the North American Shores

The discussion of the waves of Muslim immigration to America was necessary so as to contextualize and properly comprehend the arrival of the Shi'i community to America. In

[10] Ibid.

discussing the matrix of forms through which the culture of the different Shi'i groups is expressed, it will be seen that far from being a monolithic group, the Shi'i community comprises a mosaic of diverse ethnic and cultural groups that have settled in North America. As a matter of fact, it is possible to speak of a 'rainbow' nature of Shi'i Islam in North America.

Given the segmentation within the American Shi'i community, the study of Shi'ism in the American context demands a multivariate and nuanced analysis. No census figures of the numbers of Shi'is in America is available. This is because the American census does not ask for religious affiliation of the population. However, according to Jane Smith, the Twelver Shi'is, together with the Ismai'lis, form about a fifth of the American Muslim community.[11] This is a significant observation for, to date, there has been a paucity of scholarly discussion on the North American Shi'i community. Among those who migrated during the first wave to America in the 1880's were Shi'is from what was then called Greater Syria, many of whom settled in Michigan.[12] It is certain that by the beginning of the twentieth-century, there was a small Shi'i community living in Michigan.[13] Thereafter, many Lebanese Shi'is settled in Detroit, Michigan to work in the Ford Motor Company. Between 1900 and 1914 several hundred settlers

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[11] Ibid., 30.

[12] Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 19.

[13] This was confirmed to me in a recent interview I conducted with an informant in Dearborn, Michigan. She is 67 years old and her mother was born in Michigan at the turn of the century.

comprising diverse religious communities migrated from the Middle East.[14] Most of these early immigrants came from the Mount Lebanon area of what was then called the Ottoman Empire. Soon, a larger community of Shi'is started to crystallize in 1922 as other Shi'is came from areas like India and Iran.

The early Shi'is came primarily from the lower strata of society. Many were peddlers, laborers, and small business owners who were drawn to Detroit because of the presence of the Ford Motor Company in Highland Park, a neighborhood within the borders of Detroit. During the second wave described above, between 1918 and 1922, immigrants from the Arab countries poured into the Detroit area, as did people from different parts of the world. World War I had been devastating to the Middle East, and it was followed by years of drought, various epidemics, and plagues of locusts. The Ottoman Empire was dismantled, and in its place came occupation by the Western powers, France and England. Hence, many Muslims preferred migration over the political turmoil in their home countries.

Many of the Shi'is who came at this time were relatives of those who had already established themselves here. With the more liberal immigration policies after World War II, there was another large influx of immigrants to the United States in general and to the Detroit area, in particular.

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[14] Linda Walbridge, *Without Forgetting the Imam: Lebanese Shi'ism in an American Community* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 16-17.

By the 1940s, about 200 Sunni and Shi'i families had settled in Detroit.[15] Khalil Alwan, a member of the Dearborn Shi'i community in Michigan, was born in America in 1930. He recalls that his father migrated from Lebanon in 1914 to work for the railroads in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. By the time Khalil's father moved to Detroit in the 1920s, many Shi'is had settled in that area. In the 1930s, Khalil remembers that Sunnis and Shi'is would arrange joint gatherings. This corroborates our previous observation that, in the early part of the last century, it was the Islamic rather than the sectarian identity that was stressed by the Muslim community. The close relationship and joint gatherings between the Shi'is and Sunnis continued until the late 1930s when the Hashemite Club was established.[16] Hajja Marium 'Uthman, who came to Dearborn in 1949, also remembers that there was a steady influx of her Lebanese neighbors and friends after she and her family had migrated to Dearborn.[17]

The influx of Lebanese migrants led to the establishment of Shi'i institutions and centers of worship in America. Along with some of his friends, Khalil Alwan established an Islamic Sunday school in the mid 1940s. Khalil recalls that there were more social than religious activities held in the 1940s. Around this time, the Shi'is in Detroit would rent a hall to mark religious and social events. The Hashemite club, as it was then called, served the Shi'i

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[15] Ibid., 42.

[16] This was conveyed to me in a personal interview that I conducted.

[17] This was conveyed to me in a personal interview.

community until the early 1960s when a permanent mosque was built.

These early groups of Muslim immigrants tried to maintain a community of believers in an alien context, often without institutional support. The religious training available to their children and grandchildren was minimal. Neither schools nor businesses had any facilities for, nor interest in, providing opportunities for daily prayer. Those who wanted to fast during the month of Ramadan could expect no special accommodation in the workplace. It was under such difficult circumstances that the Shi'is struggled to maintain their beliefs and distinct identity.

In the early 1900's, the first generation of Muslim immigrants also settled in Quincy Point, Quincy, Massachusetts. They were among the first wave of Muslim immigrants to enter America from the Middle East. Mary Lahaj has done some research work of seven Muslim families who settled in Massachusetts. She notes that two of the seven Muslim families in her study were Shi'is, while the others were Sunnis. All of the Muslims, both Shi'is and Sunnis, came from the areas north of Tripoli, south of Beirut, or from the east in the Bekka Valley.

The group began to assemble sometime after 1875 with the settlement of the first generation of Muslims primarily from Lebanon. The current Islamic Center of New England was the dream of some seven families (both Sunni and Shi'i) who had settled in the area by the early 1900. They were businessmen, teachers, and professionals as well as merchants and blue-collar workers.

Apart from America, some early Muslim migrants settled in Canada too. By 1920, there was a Lebanese community in Lac La Biche, in Alberta, Canada. Many of these immigrants were Shi'is who came to Canada to seek better employment opportunities. By the 1950s, there were clusters of Shi'i families located in different cities in Canada and America.[18] According to Youssef M'roueh, at about the same time, some Shi'is also arrived from India and Iran.[19] Some Lebanese migrants settled in Alberta, Canada in the early part of this century. Coming from La-la in Baka valley, Ali Hamilton took up the fur trade and settled in Lac La Biche, north of Edmonton, Canada. He also served as President of Lac La Biche Chamber of Commerce.[20] Subsequently, other Lebanese migrants settled in Lac La Biche.

By the 1950s there were small clusters of Shi'i families in some of the major cities of Canada and the United States. Through the memoirs of some community leaders, we know of the observance of Muharram rituals by these Shi'is.[21] It is also probable that some other Shi'is in America did not participate in these annual commemorations. If one takes into account what we know about these immigrants and their families, plus statistics on newly arriving Iranians and (in smaller numbers)

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[18] Abdulaziz Sachedina, "A Minority Within a Minority: The Case of the Shi'a in North America" in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.) *Muslim Communities in North America*, (Albany: SUNY, 1994), 6.

[19] Youssef M'roueh, "Shi'a Population in North America" in *Ahlul bayt Assembly of North America: Abstract of Proceedings of 1996*, (Beltsville: International Graphics, 1997), 44.

[20] See *al-Ilmu Noorun*, Edmonton, Alberta, (June 1995): 4.

[21] Abdulaziz Sachedina, "A Minority Within a Minority."

Iraqi and Lebanese Shi'is, it is reasonable to estimate that today Shi'is make up at least 30 percent of the total Muslim population of North America.

Gottesman's contention that there are no more than three hundred thousand Shi'is in North America is palpably outdated.[22] M'roueh, on the other hand, claims that of the 9.6 million Muslims in America in 1995, two million of whom were Shi'is. He further maintains that there are 256 Shi'i mosques in America, a figure that appears exaggerated.[23] Yasin al-Jibouri's estimate that the Shi'i community in the US forms about 15-20 percent of the total population of seven million Muslims in America appears more tenable.[24] In the absence of accurate statistical data, however, it is impossible to verify the figures cited. Larry Poston claims that the Shi'is are confined to certain coastal areas. This view can also be challenged.[25] In fact, the Shi'i communities are located in virtually all the major cities of North America.

Muslims in Canada

The early Muslims in Canada are estimated to have arrived around 1854. Evidently, they came from Scotland and worked for the Canadian Railways and gold mines. According to the Canadian

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22 Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wa in the West*, 30.

23 Youssef M'roueh "Shi'a Population in North America," in *Ahlul Bayt Assembly*, 57. The author does not cite the source of his figures.

24 Al-Jibouri, "A Glance at Shi'a Communities in the US," in *Islamic Affairs, Virginia* (October 1993): 1. See also Jane Smith, *Islam in America*, 61.

25 Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah*, 30.

Census, there were thirteen Muslim families in Ontario by 1870, they were called Mohammedans. More Muslim families started arriving in the early twentieth century, from Lebanon, which, as mentioned, was a part of the Ottoman Empire. These Muslims assimilated, anglicized, and married into the mainstream Canadian community.

For example, Brandon was born 1910 in the province of Manitoba. His parents came from Lebanon and helped other Lebanese families relocate. These early Canadian Muslims needed a place for religious and cultural gathering. Thus, the al-Rashid mosque was opened in Edmonton in 1938. Yusuf Ali, the famous translator of the Qur'an, was at the opening ceremony. Non-Muslim neighbors were invited and introduced to Islam and Muslim culture.

Canadian census also tells us that in 1910 there were about 800 Muslims. By 1950 this figure had risen to 1800. However, there was a remarkable increase in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1970, there were 30,000 Muslims in Canada. There were several factors that led to this increase. In the 1960s the notion of multiculturalism gained more acceptance in Canada. This was reflected in changes in immigration rules. Before 1967, these rules were racist since they admitted people by race and nationality. In 1967, through changes in immigration laws, the policy of discrimination was eliminated. All ethnic backgrounds were admitted; this shift in policy had a major impact on the Muslim community. The new immigration laws were based on a points

system whereby skilled and professional people were given preference.

Many of the Lebanese who came in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Shi'is who came to Canada for better employment opportunities and to escape being drafted in the First World War. As in the case of the United States, immigrants from Pakistan Africa started arriving in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s. Salim Sachedina, for example, was an early migrant from the Khoja community in East Africa. He came to Toronto in 1966 and was struck by the paucity of fellow Shi'is. The Shi'is would meet in basements and later on, in rented halls. The first major Shi'i center built in Canada was the Ja'ffari Islamic Center (initially called the Muhammadi Islamic Center). It opened its doors in Toronto in 1978.

Reasons for Migration to North America

The predominance of mainly Lebanese Shi'is in the early part of this century can be contrasted with the present North American Shi'i community, which is composed of highly diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Most of the contemporary Shi'is have relocated in numbers since the 1970s. They originate from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, the Indian sub-continent, the Gulf States, East Africa, and parts of North Africa. In addition, a growing number of Afro-Americans are converting to Shi'ism after having initially converted to Sunnism or to the Nation of Islam. Some Sufi groups with Shi'i proclivities have also been established in America. There

are at least three Shi'i Sufi organizations within the Iranian community in California.[26]

Various factors have precipitated the proliferation of Shi'i migrants: As mentioned, in part, this has been a response to changes in American immigration laws in the past. Other factors have also precipitated increased migration to North America. Adverse socio-political conditions in the Middle East, Pakistan and India have occasioned increased migration to the West. In addition, the Islamic revolution in Iran,[27] the inimical socio-political conditions in Iraq, civil strife in Pakistan, the breaking up of Pakistan into East Bangladesh, anti-Muslim pogroms in India, the civil war in Lebanon, adverse socio-economic conditions in East Africa, the exodus of East African Asians during the regime of Idi Amin in Uganda, and the establishment of the anti-Shi'i Taliban regime in Afghanistan have all contributed to the increased Shi'i presence here. In addition, Shi'is come from a large number of African nations, including Kenya, Uganda, Madagascar, Tanzania, Mozambique, Congo, Burundi, and many others. Thus, the Shi'i community in North America now comprises a variety of people from many nations who represent diverse linguistic, national, ethnic and racial backgrounds. Naturally, these immigrants represent a great range of Islamic thoughts and ideologies. In the following

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[26] See details in Ron Kelley, "Muslim in Los Angeles," in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.) *Muslim Communities*, 160-161.

[27] According to some estimates, there are approximately a million Iranians in America, most of whom are Shi'is although a considerable number follow the Baha'i faith. See Jane Smith, *Islam in America*, 53.

section, we will briefly examine the main Shi'i groups, their origins, and settlement in North America in more depth.

The Iraqi Community

In the 1950s and 1960s, Iraqi Shi'is initially came here as students, but many chose not to return home due to the adverse political conditions in Iraq, especially after the establishment of the Baath party in 1958. Other Iraqis sought asylum in North America in the late 1970s after the establishment of Saddam Hussein's regime. Dispersed in different parts of the country, these Iraqis are well educated, highly skilled, and quite affluent, having established businesses or secured well-paid employment. Most of the Iraqis come from Baghdad, Najaf, Kerbala, or Basra.

In contrast to these Iraqis are a myriad of refugees who either escaped from Iraq or were captured by the allied forces during the first Gulf war. In addition, many Iraqi soldiers escaped to Saudi Arabia from Kuwait during the war. Having been imprisoned in camps in Saudi Arabia, many Iraqis sought and were granted asylum in the USA in the mid-1990s. They have settled in different parts of North America ranging from New York, Detroit, Chicago, and Denver, to Nashville, Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

In addition, southern Iraqis came to Dearborn from Basra, al-Nasiriyya, al-Amarahand and Hawr al-Hammar. Nearly ten thousand were given asylum in the United States. Many have formed a very tightly knit community located along Dearborn's northern border with Detroit.

In contrast to the Iraqis who migrated in the 1970s and 1980s, most of these recent arrivals from Iraq form an unskilled labor force with little knowledge of English. Consequently, many tend to work in factories and perform other manual work. The recently arrived Iraqi refugees renew ties with the homeland, importing, in the process, their own distinctive cultural accretions. Having lived in the Shi'i 'holy places' (*'Atabat*) like Najaf and Kerbala where the Shi'i leadership (*maraji'*)[28] reside, Iraqi Shi'is bring with them a deep sense of religious commitment and the desire to replicate religious services in America. Their religious fervor is not always shared by those Iraqis who migrated to America earlier.

Compared to all the other Shi'i groups, it is not an exaggeration to state that the Iraqi Shi'is (especially the recently arrived refugees) harbor the 'myth of return' the most. Many of them hope to return home once the difficulties in Iraq are eliminated. Due to their recent arrival and strong religious background, the Iraqis tend to be more ritualistic and strict in their religious observance. They often perpetuate home customs such as hitting themselves on the head and using iron chains when flagellating.[29]

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[28] A *marja'* is the most learned juridical authority in the Shi'i community whose rulings on the *shari'a* (Islamic moral-legal law) are followed by his adherents. In the absence of the twelfth Shi'i imam, the *marja'* assumes the responsibility of re-interpreting the relevance of Islamic norms to the modern era. He is thus able to impinge on the religious and social lives of his followers.

[29] This was confirmed to be by an imam of a Shi'i center.

The Iranian Shi'i community

The Iranians form the largest Shi'i group in America. Some estimates place the population of the Iranian community at close to a million, a number that is increasing annually.[30] The number of Iranians migrating to America has increased dramatically during the last three decades. In fact, Iranians account for fifty two percent of Mid-Eastern Muslim immigrants in America. Another notable fact is that a fourth of all Muslim immigrants from around the world are Iranians, outnumbering immigrants from all other Muslim-populated countries.[31] Most of these Iranians came to America after the Iranian revolution in 1979 and settled in California, which, it is estimated, has a population of about 400,000 Iranians.[32] Of these, it is estimated that approximately 45,000-60,000 Iranians live in San Diego alone.[33]

The Iranian Shi'i community in America can be divided into three distinct groups. The first group is comprised of Iranian professionals, many of whom left their native land fearing the policies of the new regime after the revolution in 1979. Having

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[30] Jane Smith, *Islam* 53.

[31] Carol Stone, "Estimate of Muslims Living in America," in Yvonne Haddad, ed., *The Muslims*, 33.

[32] Frederick Denny, "Church/Sect Theory and Emerging North American Muslim Communities: Issues and Trends," in Earle Waugh and Frederick Denny (eds.), *The Shaping of an American Islamic Discourse: A Memorial to Fazlur Rahman* (Atlanta; Scholars Press, 1998), 235.

[33] M. K. Hermansen, "The Muslims of San Diego," in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities*, 187. It should be noted that not all Iranians are Muslims. The figures quoted include members from the Bahai, Jewish and Christian Armenian communities.

been influenced by the Shah's white revolution and 'modernization' policies that introduced western life style, alcohol, and drugs in Iran, many of these Iranians have adopted a secular outlook and have become estranged from Islam. It is not an exaggeration to state that, among the various American Shi'i communities, the Iranians constitute the most alienated group and have assimilated themselves most to American culture.

In contrast to the above group are fellow Iranians who also came to America after the revolution but fully support the revolution and share its ideals. Many of them are students at various universities who promote the ideology of the current Iranian regime in Islamic centers. Much hostility is evident between the diverse Iranian groups as anger is directed at those who propagate Iranian ideology. Due to their pro-government political stance, these Iranians are alienated not only from the larger American society but are also estranged from their own fellow Iranians, the majority of whom are secularized and assimilated to American culture.

The third group of Iranians is comprised of those immigrants who are alarmed at the dissolution of religious values especially among their younger generation but who are not affiliated to the regime in Iran. To imbibe their youth with religious instruction, they organize events like Sunday classes, weekly lectures and monthly Qur'anic classes in their houses. An example of such an organization is the Islamic center of Beverly Hills. The

organization's views differ radically from those propagated by the government in Iran and the MSA-PSG. [34]

Since they prefer to distance themselves from Iranian politics, these Iranians do not, generally speaking, directly ally themselves with the various Iranian centers. Instead, they join Shi'is from other parts of the world like the Khoja or Pakistani Shi'is to commemorate Shi'i religious holidays.

In addition to the Iranian groups, mention should also be made of Afghani Muslims. When they came to power, the Taliban persecuted the Shi'is in Afghanistan, especially those living in Bamyan and Mazar al-Sharif areas. This led many Afghani Shi'is to seek asylum in America and Canada. Although not as significant in numbers as the other groups, Afghani Shi'is have settled in different parts of North America. Since they are small in number and share cultural and linguistic affiliations with the Iranians, Afghani Shi'is have blended with Iranians and often visit Iranian centers. In some cases, to preserve their distinctive culture, Afghani Shi'is have established their own mosques in areas like Toronto.

The Lebanese Shi'is

A survey conducted by Haddad and Adair shows that almost all of the first, second, and third generation Muslims were of Lebanese ancestry. This substantiates the view that the Lebanese were among the first immigrants to settle in the United States in

[34] Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *Competing Visions of Islam in the United States: A Study of Los Angeles* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 33.

substantial numbers.[35] According to the Detroit monthly, over time, almost entire [Lebanese] villages were transplanted to the Detroit area.[36]

To understand the reasons for the migration of Lebanese Shi'is, it is useful to look at the example of one of the founders of the Islamic center in New England, Mohamed Omar Awad, a Sunni Muslim. At the age of twenty two, Omar left his village in the mountainous area north of Tripoli. Like other immigrants from rural areas of what now constitutes Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan, Omar came to America to flee from the Turkish army. He stated that there was no reason for him to leave his homeland; however, he did not wish to fight for the Ottomans in Yemen. He had six uncles who had gone to fight and never came back.[37] The anecdote provides a guide to the reasons for the early Lebanese migration to North America.

Like other Muslims residing in America at that time, the early Lebanese immigrants, "seemed content, or at least constrained, to keep Islam within the parameters of their ethnic associations."[38] In a constitution that was drawn for an Islamic center in New England, no reference is made to religion, while thoughts of "Arab" nationalism are evidenced. The early Lebanese found no large Muslim

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35 Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, *Islamic Values*, 15.

36 Sulayman Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1999), 51.

37 Haj Muhammad Omar (Awad), Interviewed by Mary Lahaj, 4 October 1983, Weymouth, Massachusetts.

38 C. Eric Lincoln, "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History, in *The Muslim Community in North America*, eds. Earle Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban, and Regula Qureshi, 219.

community present. They were quite liberal in their lifestyles and often assimilated themselves to the American way of life. This point is corroborated by a survey conducted by Haddad and Lummis, which indicates that Americans born of Lebanese parents tend to be among the most liberal Muslims in America.[39]

The South Asian Shi'is

The South Asian Muslim community in America is composed of migrants from Pakistan, India, and a lesser number from Bangladesh. South Asian Muslims originally migrated from the Punjab in the late nineteenth century. As early as 1895, Muslims from the Indian coastal area are reported to have settled in California, Oregon, Washington, and Vancouver. Many were farm laborers and unskilled workers from the Punjab. Other Muslims from India are known to have migrated to California in 1912.[40]

Stories of their successes and the distinct possibilities of employment opportunities encouraged other Muslims from the same area to migrate here. The enlargement of the South Asian Muslim community spanned over several decades increasing especially after the second-world war as immigrants came seeking better education and economic empowerment.[41] Presently, almost six thousand Pakistani Muslims come here annually.[42] These

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[39] Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, *Islamic Values*, 171.

[40] M. K. Hermansen, "The Muslims of San Diego," in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities*, 171.

[41] Sulayman Nyang, *Islam in the United States*, 40.

[42] Carol Stone, "Estimate of Muslims Living in America," in Yvonne Haddad, ed. *The Muslims*, 32.

immigrants also benefited from the relaxation of American immigration laws in 1965, for it meant that students who had settled here could sponsor family members to join them. As we have mentioned, President Lyndon Johnson ratified an immigration act increasing quotas from non-European countries. Immigration statistics and the census show a sharp rise in the numbers immigrating from India and Pakistan in the late 1960s, from Bangladesh after 1971 (when it split off from Pakistan), and from Afghanistan after the Soviets invaded it in 1979.[43]

Many Indian and Pakistani students entered the United States under U.S. scholarship programs and then decided to remain in America. Among the South Asian migrants were many Shi'is who, like the Sunnis, decided to take advantage of the favorable immigration laws by settling here. The majority of these Shi'is have migrated here since the 1970s.

By the 1950s, small groupings of Shi'i families were to be found in some of the major cities of America. While in recent years the community has been represented by well-educated professionals and members of the middle and upper middle classes, such was not true of the earlier immigrants. South Asian Shi'is in America are concentrated in major cities like Chicago, Atlanta, New York and Los Angeles. In Canada, most South Asian Shi'is have settled in Toronto and Vancouver. Toronto, in particular, is home to a very multicultural and cosmopolitan community of immigrants. In addition, it has many Shi'a centers, which cater to Shi'i communities from different parts of the world. Some South Asians

[43] Leonard, *Muslims in the United States*, 13.

have also located in other cities like Montreal, Ottawa, and Edmonton. After the events of September 11, 2001, tighter restrictions on and supervision of immigrants in the United States were enforced. The Patriot Act and greater supervision of immigrants led many American Muslim immigrants to move to Canada, where immigration laws are more relaxed and there is less supervision of Muslim immigrants.

The Khoja Shi'is

Little is known of the provenance and activities of the Khoja Shi'i Muslims. Hence, a brief purview of their background is necessary. Khojas trace their ancestry to India, more specifically to Sind, Punjab, Gujarat, and Kutch where their ancestors were converted to Islam in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The term 'Khoja' is derived from an Indian caste consisting mostly of Isma'ili and Sunni Muslims. The term is also applicable to the Twelver Shi'is who spilt off from the main Isma'ili community in India in the late nineteenth century.

Pir Sadr al-Din (d. 1369 or 1416) was an Isma'ili *da'i* (proselyte) who is credited with the mass conversion of the Khojas from the Lohanas, a Hindu caste living predominantly in the Gujarat province in India. Pir Sadr al-Din is also said to have named them Khojas, a derivation from the Persian *khwaja*, an honorific appellation referring to a master or prominent person. Pir Sadr al-Din also laid the basis for the communal organization of the

Khojas by building the first three *jamaat khanas* (assembly or prayer halls) and appointing their *Mukhis* (leaders).[44]

The arrival of the Agha Khan Hasan 'Ali Shah to India from Iran in 1840 led to an escalation of earlier disputes within the Khoja community about the rights of the Imam. In 1866, the judgment of Sir Joseph Arnold in a lawsuit brought against the Agha Khan by excommunicated members of the Barbhai party fully upheld his rights and authority, leading to the dissidents separating themselves from the Isma'ili community. They were known as Sunni Khojas. Later dissidents, seceding in 1877 and 1901, formed the Ithna-asheri Khoja communities in Bombay and East Africa.

During the 1950s, the Khoja community in America was comprised mainly of students who lived in isolated areas where there was no sizeable Muslim community. Hence, it is difficult to speak of a distinct Khoja presence in North America before the 1960s. The majority of the Khojas migrated to the West in 1972-3. This was a result of East African government policies that favored Africans in the social, economic, and educational spheres. These measures included the nationalization of Asian-owned enterprises and buildings. The measures also stressed better education for Africans, often at the expense of the Indian community.

Increased emigration by the Khoja community was also precipitated by the expulsion of Ugandan Asians by Idi Amin in 1972. Shi'i Khojas from Tanzania and Kenya also migrated due to the inimical socio-political conditions in their homeland countries.

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[44] Wilferd Madelung, "Khodjas," in EI (2).

The Khojas are known for their sense of discipline and organization. In 1976, they established a world body called the World Federation of Khoja Shi'a Ithna'asheri Jamaat in England. With the help of this world body, they have established numerous centers of worship throughout America. The Federation's stated aim is to act as an umbrella organization, catering to the needs of the world Khoja community. The largest Khoja community in North America is in Toronto, whereas the biggest Khoja congregation in America is in New York. In addition, there are Khoja centers in cities like Los Angeles, Orlando, Minneapolis, Allentown, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

In addition to the Twelver Shi'is, there are other Shi'i groups in America. These include the Zaydis, most of whom come from Yemen. Many Zaydis were among the first Shi'is to come to the United States. While a small number settled in Brooklyn, New York, the major concentration of Yemenis in the United States is in the Dearborn area. Many came to work at the Ford Rouge factory in Dearborn.

The Yemenis have been migrating to Dearborn since the beginning of the Arab migration. Like the other Shi'i groups, they arrived in larger numbers in the mid-1970s. Many hold unskilled positions in Dearborn. Some Yemenis, called the *musallin*, wrestled control over a mosque and imposed a rather rigid interpretation of Islam, including controlling the inclusion of women in the mosque. Only Arabic is spoken in the Yemeni Zaydi mosque and in the 1980s they even began broadcasting of the call to prayer (*adhan*) over the public loudspeakers.

There are also very small numbers of other groups that identify themselves as Shi'as. These include the 'Alawis, who are mostly from Syria, northern Lebanon, and parts of eastern Turkey.

The Isma'ilis

Among the Shi'a groups in America are the Nizari (or Agha Khani) and Bohra Isma'ilis. The Isma'ilis branched off from the main Shi'a body after the death of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. They claimed that Isma'il, not and Musa, was the true successor of Imam al-Sadiq. Today, the Nizari Isma'ilis reside in over twenty five countries including India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, and in parts of China and Tajikistan.

Most Isma'ilis migrated to the United States after 1960 as a result of the lifting of U.S. restrictions on the immigration of Asians. The majority of the Isma'ilis are also Khojas of Indo-Pakistani origin; many were living in Africa during the British colonial period. Like the Twelver Shi'is, the Isma'ilis left Africa after many African countries achieved independence and adopted Africanization policies, through which indigenous Africans replaced expatriates in the government bureaucracies. In addition, due to limited educational and business opportunities, the Agha Khan, the spiritual leader of the Nizari Isma'ilis, encouraged his followers to migrate to the West. Many Isma'ilis have settled in Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver where they have attained great affluence. There is also a sizable Isma'ili community in New York.

The Isma'ili community's diversity is a microcosm of the Islamic world, which in itself comprises many communities with differing *tariqah* (paths) and cultural traditions. In common with other Shi'a Muslims, the Ismai'lis affirm that after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali (AS) became the first Imam of the Muslim Community. Ismai'lis believe that this spiritual leadership, known as the Imamat, continues through the hereditary line of Imam 'Ali and his wife Fatima (AS), the Prophet's daughter. Prince Karim Aga Khan is believed to be the current and forty ninth Imam (spiritual leader) of the Isma'ilis.

However, due to their esoteric teachings and their belief that the *shari'a* (Islamic law) can be abrogated or changed by the Imam of the time, many Muslim jurists do not accept Isma'ilis to be within the fold of Islam.

The Ismai'li Community in Canada

As mentioned, the first Isma'ilis arrived in Canada in the mid-1960s as part of a professional pool that immigrated from the United Kingdom and Western European. A few Isma'ili entrepreneurs also arrived at that time in search of economic opportunities. This steady growth continued until the early 1970s when political changes in many Asian and African countries led to the arrival of large numbers of Isma'ilis in North America. Today, seventy five thousand Ismai'lis are settled throughout Canada, and occupy senior positions in professions and in government offices. Many have grown to be successful business people.

The Isma'ili Muslim Community in Canada is governed by volunteers under the aegis of the Aga Khan Shia Imami Isma'ili Council for Canada, headquartered in Toronto. Local Isma'ili Councils are also based in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.

The Aga Khan Development Network

Wherever Ismai'lis have settled, they have evolved a well-defined institutional framework through which they have made progress in the educational, health, housing and economic spheres. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of development agencies, institutions and programs working to improve living conditions and opportunities in specific regions of the developing world. The three main areas of the AKDN's activities are social development, economic development and culture.

The economic activities of the AKDN are carried out by the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and its affiliates, Tourism Promotion Services and Industrial Promotion Services, as well as other financial institutions. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture co-ordinates the AKDN's cultural activities. Under its aegis are the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Historic Cities Support Program.

The AKDN institutions work with many partners. In Canada, they have collaborated on development initiatives with Canadian institutions such as the Canadian International Development

Agency, the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, McGill University, McMaster University, and the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.

Sufism in the American Context

Increasing American interest in the 1960s in "religions of the east" coincided with the emergence of several Sufi groups in America. Sufism was brought to and established in North America by various Sufi masters. Although frowned upon by many Muslims, various Sufi groups have established themselves in America. Due to their willingness to welcome non-Muslims to participate in their *dhikr* sessions and the fact that they do not stress the more formal elements of Islamic devotions, Sufi groups have attracted many converts to their groups.

Sufism claims to breathe life and spirituality into the life of its adherents. American converts to Sufism also find a refreshing path to God. In addition, Sufism cuts across the racial, ethnic and cultural definitions that characterize much of American Islam and accentuates the egalitarian dimension of Islam. Because of this, its adherents are drawn from all over the world.

Sufism also appeals to American women because of its more lenient laws on gender mixing during worship time. Indeed, some Jerrahi orders even allow female leaders of *shaykhas* to conduct their *dhikr* (remembrance) sessions. This is in complete contrast to

many North American mosques in which women are either secluded or excluded.

The writings of Sufi leaders like Hazrat Inayat Khan, Idries Shah and Fadlallah Haeri, with their emphasis on the inner life over the outer forms of religion have been very influential on American travellers on the inner *tariqa* or path. Inayat Khan, for example, was one of the first to teach Sufi doctrines in the West between 1910 and 1927. He initiated a number of disciples and founded a Sufi order in the Americas. His teachings are contained in the voluminous series, *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*. In the 1960s, his son Pir Vilayat Khan emerged as an important Sufi leader in the West. His movement spread rapidly.

The Shi'i Sufi Movements

Among the Shi'i population in North America are various Shi'i Sufi groups, the majority of whom came to North America from Iran. Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, an Iranian psychiatrist, is the leader of the Nimatullahi order in America. He was invested with this position in 1953. In Iran there are Nimatullahi centers in more than one hundred cities and an estimated 30,000 members of the order. Nurbakhsh first came to America in 1974. He became aware of the interest in Sufism on the part of Americans he had met in Iran and among Iranians who had studied in America,[45] Dr. Nurbakhsh rented a house in the San Francisco area for a brief

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45 Nimatullahi http://www.nimatullahi.org/

period. Early gatherings were assembled through small fliers advertising his presence posted in bookstores in Berkeley.

In 1975 Dr. Nurbakhsh sent his deputy, the Shaikh of Shiraz, Mr. Niktab, to come to America every summer. A house was acquired in San Francisco and one in New York to serve as *khaneqah*s (worship places) of the order. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, Dr. Nurbakhsh lived in Los Angeles for a time. The order has since expanded world-wide and since 1983 Dr. Nurbakhsh has resided in England. There are Nimatullahi centers in nine American cities. The majority of the disciples are Anglo-American, but a significant number, perhaps, fifty percent on the West Coast, are Iranians. Professor William Chittick is a prominent scholar in Islamic studies. According to him, Nurbakhsh "pays little attention to the *shari'a*, but he discusses the importance of Sufi communal activities such as sessions of *dhikr*."[46]

Nurbaksh's order now has centres in many American cities, including, New York, Washington D.C., and Boston. Nurbakhsh stresses a Sufism concerned with doing and seeing rather than with thinking and talking, one whose aim is the realization of the truth through love and devotion.

Another branch of the Nimatullahis is led by Naser 'Ali Shah, who is based in Istanbul and Paris. *Murids* (followers) of this order to be found in various cities like New York, Boulder,

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[46] William Chittick, "Sufism," Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World IV, 108. For a brief history of the Ni'matullahiyah, including this branch see Alan A. Godlas, "Ni'matullahiyah" in Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, ed. John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) III, 252. Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Salih Ali Shah The Illustrious Treatise of Salih's Advice (Pand-i Salih) (Tehran: n. p., 1986), p. 10.

Colorado, and North Carolina. In this branch, followers have to accept Islam. 'Ali Shah's nephew, who lives in Rhode Island, is the American leader or khalifa.[47]

Nimatullahi-Gunabadi

The Nimatullahi-Gunabadi Sufi order was established by Sultan Husayn Tabandah, Rida Ali Shah (b. 1914). It has branches in Orange County, California and Toronto, Canada. The current leader succeeded his father and was appointed khalifa of the Order in 1960. He normally resides in Iran; most of the followers of the order in North America are members of the Persian community.

Ja'fari-Shadhili Order

Shaykh Fadlallah Haeri is an Iraqi engineer and a Shi'i Muslim who was affiliated with 'Abd al-Qadir's Sufi group, the Habibiyya, during the 1970's. In 1980, he and a group of followers established a Sufi community, the Zahra Trust, in Blanco Texas, near San Antonio. In 1981 a mosque and madrasa were started as

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[47] For a history of the Nimatullahis, including a brief section on the biography of Javad Nurbakhsh and the history of the order in America, see Javad Nurbakhsh, "The Nimatullahi" in *Islamic Spirituality Manifestations*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 144-159. A further historical source is Nasrollah Pourjavady and Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Kings of Love: The Poetry and History of the Ni'matullahi Sufi Order* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978). He has written many books in Persian of which quite a number are now available in English translation. For basic practices of the order the best sources are: Javad Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi, 1978) and *In the Paradise of the Sufis* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi, 1979).

the nucleus of a community known as the "Bayt al-Deen" (home of religion) to be modeled on the first Islamic community at Madina. In winter 1981 the first "Bayt al-Deen Sufi Gathering" was convened at this location. By the late 1980's, however, Haeri had decided to move his organization to England.[48]

Oveyssi-Shahmaghsoudi

Another Sufi movement of Iranian Shi'a origin is the Oveyssi order.[49] It has influenced two Sufi movements functioning in the United States, both descended from Shah Maghsoud Angha

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[48] Haeri has published extensively on Islamic topics including: *Songs of iman on the Roads of Pakistan*: talks given during a tour of Pakistan (Blanco, TX : Zahra Publications, c1983). *Beams of illumination from the Divine Revelation. Juz' 'Amma*, the last section of the Qur'an (Blanco, TX, USA : Zahra Publications, c1985). *Beginning's End* (London ; New York : KPI in association with Zahra Publications, 1987). *The Journey of the Self : a Sufi Guide to Personality* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991). *Keys to the Qur'an*, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri. New ed. (Reading, UK: Garnet, c1993). *Living Islam* (Dorset : Element, 1989).
For a time they issued a magazine available as Nuradeen, *An Islamic Sufi Journal: Selections* (Blanco, Texas: Zahra Publications, 1983). Kinney, Jay "Sufism Comes to America", 20. One American Muslim described an experience he had as part of this community, "We were Shi'ites for about a year. In that time I learned a lot about something I wouldn't have learned about. At some point we were in a communal meeting in Austin, Texas, and one of the members of the community was saying we have to teach our children that to be Shiite is like being black in South Africa. He wasn't black. (My wife) and I both looked at each other and I later said we did not become Muslim in order to live our lives as if we were black in South Africa, and hated and reviled by everyone and having to defend ourselves from sudden death." Steven Barboza, "A Separate Peace: Abd al-Hayy Moore" in *American Jihad* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 71-72. Barboza's volume contains brief autobiographical statements by American Muslims.

[49] "Uvaysi" or "Oveyssi" in Persian pronunciation refers to a line of Sufis who have received their original initiate transmission spiritually rather than through direct contact with the Prophet Muhammad. It is named after Uways al-Qarani, who was a contemporary of the Prophet and received such a transmission from him.

(d. 1980).[50] The larger movement, known as the Shah Maghsoudi order, is headed by the son of Shah Maghsoud Angha, Mawlana Salaheddin Ali Nader Shah Angha, known to his followers as "Hazrat Pir."[51] In the line of succession of this order, he is listed as the 42nd teacher and an affiliation to the Kubrawiyya line is indicated. The order, which is also known as Maktab Tarighat Oveysi or in English as, the School of Islamic Sufism, has many centers throughout the world, including the U.S., Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. There are at least fifty centers in California. While each center is somewhat autonomous, all activities are coordinated through the main office, which is located in San Rafael, California. A number of the center directors are women, some are American, and some are American women.

Meetings held by Molana Salaheddin Angha and his deputies often attract audiences, mainly Iranian, of hundreds for *dhikr* and meditative practices. At the centers in Burbank and Concord, California, meetings are held on alternate evenings to accommodate the large crowds. In addition to weekly services, various educational and community service programs, such as meditation classes, children's programs, and prison outreach, are offered through the centers.[52]

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[50] http://mto.shahmaghsoudi.org/

[51] A biographical note states that he is the "present master of the School of Islamic Sufism" and has 300,000 students worldwide. Shah Maghsoud Angha, *al-Rasa'el* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1986), 121.
Shah Maghsoud Angha, *al-Rasa'el* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1986), 119.

[52] Shah Maghsoud was the 41st teacher in this line. He immigrated to the United States after the Iranian revolution and in buried in Novato, California. A work representative of

Dawood Bekhtashi Order

The Dawoodi Bektashi is a Shi'i Sufi group based in Hartford, Connecticut. It is a relatively small group and meets every second Wednesdays for practising *dhikr*. They also have an internet website where members or prospective members can share their experiences. The purpose of this discussion list it to tackle issues, questions, and challenges faced by people who choose to keep their own independent *dhikr* meetings or circles of remembrance as small groups or lone dervishes. This list has been established by authorized members of the Dawoodi-Bektashi Order of Dervishes (Muslim-Sufi) to encourage newcomers to maintain their own *dhikr* meetings. Members of other Sufi orders or other movements are welcome at the discretion of the listowners.

International Association of Sufism

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his teaching is Shah Maghsoud Angha, *Dawn* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989). Some of his works are, Salaheddin Ali Nader Shah, *Peace* (Verdugo City, CA: MTO Shahmaghsoudi Publications, 1987), *The Secret Word* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), *The Approaching Promise* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), and *The Fragrance of Sufism* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1996). Molana Salaheddin was appointed successor by his father in 1970. Dr. 'Ali Kianfar, Oveys-e-Gharani and His School (in Persian)(Hayward, CA: Yuin University Publications, 1983), 222. A meeting at the Burbank center is described by Ron Kelley in "Muslims in Los Angeles" in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, eds. *Muslim Communities in North America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 160-161. In a typical meeting filmed by Islam TV in Los Angeles, men and women sit separately on the floor of a large hall, they are all dressed in white matching garments. The Pir sits in front watching them as they sway back and forth and chant response lines to Persian devotional hymns. Nahid Angha, Principles of Sufism (San Rafael, CA: International Association of Sufism, 1991), and *The Journey* (San Rafael, CA: International Association of Sufism, 1991). Ali Kianfar, *The Zekr* (San Rafael, CA: International Association of Sufism, 1985).

The other movement derived from the teachings of Shahmaghsoud is headed by his daughter, Dr. Nahid Angha, and the wife of another Sufi, Dr. Ali Kianfar.[53] Together they have founded the International Association of Sufism, based in San Rafael, California, which aims to facilitate communication and cooperation across many Sufi orders. According to Dr. Nahid Angha, this movement was established in 1983 in order to introduce Sufism to the public and provide a forum for dialogue among Sufi orders, and to carry on the message of Sufism in a changing world. This organization publishes a Journal called, "Sufism: An Inquiry" and has sponsored two annual international conferences of Sufism in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1994 and 1995. Its membership is predominantly American and the formal practice of Islam is not required of its members.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the history of the Shi'i community in North America. It has shown that the early Shi'is immigrants arrived at about the same time as the Sunnis did. Initially, the two groups ignored their sectarian differences and focused on their Islamic identity. Hence, they worshipped together, often intermarried, and met at various social functions. In addition, they represented the Muslim community as a singular group.

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53 http://www.ias.org/

Increased migration led to the establishment of mosques and the resurfacing of sectarian differences. Gradually, the Sunnis and Shi'is became affiliated to their own sectarian and ethnic groups. The chapter has also shown that, far from being monolithic, the Shi'i community is quite diverse. Shi'is in North America come from different countries, the majority of whom are from Iran. However, there are many Shi'is of Iraqi, Iranian and South Asian origins.

In the following chapters, we will see that, with time, the Shi'i community in North America has become diverse and differentiated. This diversity has led to communal fragmentation as each community has chosen different ways to adapt to the North American milieu. In many instances, the communities have chosen to express their faith and beliefs in culturally-conditioned forms.

Chapter Two

The Challenges and Visions of the North American Shi'i Community

As we discussed in chapter one, the early Muslim immigrants arrived at the North American shores in the nineteenth century. Subsequently, the community came to be characterized by waves of immigration from different parts of the world. The first mosque built in the United States was in Ross, North Dakota, in the early 1920s. The earliest mosque that is still functional was built in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1934. Since its establishment, this mosque has been refurbished and extended.[54] In the early part of the last century, Iowa attracted many Lebanese migrants due to opportunities to work on railroads and in factories.

The North American Shi'i community was initially concentrated in areas like Michigan and in smaller cities across North America. The Lebanese Shi'is in Detroit would initially meet in rented places. The increasing number of Shi'i migrants and the subsequent rise in the Shi'i population led to the establishment of Islamic centers. The first Shi'i center of worship in America was the Islamic Center of America, which opened its doors in Dearborn, Michigan in 1963. Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Chirri, who had relocated to America in 1949, served as the imam of the center. Subsequently, other centers of worship were built in Dearborn and other cities. With a population of more than 75,000 migrants,

[54] Jane Smith, *Islam in America*, 56.

Dearborn presently has one of the largest Shi'i communities in North America.

The increasing number of Shi'i migrants to North America in the 1960s and 1970s necessitated the establishment of centers and places of worship to furnish the needs of the community. Associations and groups were established to serve the growing community. In 1973, the Iraqi born Yasin al-Jibouri founded the Islamic Society of Georgia and began publishing a newsletter called *Islamic Affairs*, which was, in the view of the author, "the most powerful advocate for Shi'ism in the country."[55] In 1976, the prominent Shi'i spiritual leader of the time, Ayatullah al-Khu'i (d. 1992) sent a representative, Shaykh Muhammad Sarwar from Quetta, Pakistan, to establish the Khu'i Foundation in America. This marked the beginning of an epoch in which the Shi'i religious leadership would be actively engaged in furnishing religious guidance to its followers in the West. Eleven years later in 1987, Ayatullah al-Khu'i asked al-Sayyid Fadhil Milani, a prominent *mujtahid*, to establish a similar center in London, England.

The proliferation of diverse Shi'i migrants to North America in the 1970s necessitated the establishment of centers and places of worship to furnish the religious needs of the community. Subsequently, more centers were established by various *maraji'* throughout North America. Gradually, the Shi'i community became engaged in providing religious centers and

[55] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah*, 108. Later on, Yasin al-Jibouri relocated to Virginia where he founded the Islamic society of Virginia Inc.

facilitating infrastructures that would protect and perpetuate the identity of its members.

The Alawi foundation, based in New York, has also helped to establish Shi'i religious centers in different parts of America. Before the revolution in the Islamic republic of Iran, the Alawi Foundation (then called the Pahlavi Foundation) looked after Iranian financial interests in America. After the revolution, the Foundation was placed under the direct management of the Mostazafan Foundation in Tehran. Subsequently, the Foundation's name was changed to Alawi.

The Alawi Foundation helps establish centers in Houston, Washington and New York. In addition, it has helped to establish small Shi'i centers in America. The World Federation of Khoja Shi'a Ithna'asheri Communities, based in England, has also financed many Khoja centers in North America. The appendix at the end of this study lists almost two hundred Shi'i centers and mosques in North America, a figure that is constantly increasing.

In this chapter, our observations on Shi'ism in North America will be based on a survey conducted in 2005-6. Our observations are also based on our visits to and interaction with various Shi'i centers in different parts of North America. We have also quoted from a survey of Muslim youths that was conducted in Toronto, Canada. Based on the various surveys, the chapter will examine the composition of the Shi'i community in North America, some of the key challenges confronting the Shi'i communities, the possible solutions and some of the visions and aspirations that the centers have for the future.

The Impact of Ethnicity

As we discussed in chapter one, whereas the early Muslims arrived primarily from the Arab world, post war immigrants represent a wide array of linguistic, cultural, and national origins. Increased immigration from various parts of the world has resulted in the Shi'i community in North America becoming more fragmented as bonds of common faith have been replaced by ties to common origins, ethnicity, and culture.

In many North American cities, instead of forming organizations based on Islam, other characteristics such as ethnic, cultural, and even national ties have prevailed. The process of ethnicization, involves linking a specific population to distinctive cultural characteristics.[56] The ethnic component is important to many communities as it unites communal members and perpetuates customs imported from the home country. Thus, mosques have tended to fragment along ethnic lines and remained loyal to customs fermented in home states.

In the processes of cultural negotiations, re-definitions and re-appropriation of a different culture, members of the Shi'i community have pursued different ways to adapt to the North American milieu. These include shared language, cultural norms, and the affirmation of a common history of a people. It is these homeland settings that construct social and religious identities among many Shi'is in North America.

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[56] Rachel Bloul, "Engendering Muslim Identities: Deterritorialization and the Ethnicization Process in France," in Metcalfe, ed., *Making Muslim Space*, 234.

In general, large cities like New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Detroit, and Chicago are characterized by different Shi'i centers established along ethnic lines. Thus, one finds a Lebanese, Iranian, Pakistani and Khoja mosque without these being linked or affiliated in any coherent way. In some cities, members from the same ethnic background also establish separate centers due to 'mosque politics' and the struggle for power. Appendix two in our survey substantiates the point being made. It shows that centers are classified as belonging to different ethnic origins. Thus, some identify themselves as primarily of East African or Indo-Pakistani origins whereas others are classified as of Iranian or Arab origins.

Why do members coalesce around mosques that are frequented by people from the same background? From our discussions with members of various ethnic communities, it was evident that institutions that identify themselves ethnically are important for the psychological survival of new immigrants since they perpetuate customs that resonate with the home environment. Ethnic mosques also provide stability and comfort in an alien world, preserving rites that have been established since time immemorial. In addition, the ethnic factor is important to many communities as it unites communal members and strengthens religious convictions in a culturally acceptable manner. Ethnicity also helps to militate against assimilation to the pervasive influence of North American culture.

However, the existence of variant cultural traditions almost ineluctably creates islands of ethnicity and race because of what Sulayman Nyang has aptly termed 'the process of Islandization' –

i.e., the proliferation of religious organizations which are ethnic outfits that disguise themselves behind Islamic masks.[57] The pervasive influence of ethnicity draws cultural rather than religious boundaries in the context of a pluralism that is engendered by an integrated global society.

Significantly, appendix one supports the view that the multitudinous Shi'i centers founded here since the 1980s have tended to establish themselves along ethnic lines. This endorses the view that ethnicity is a persuasive theme in Shi'i religious discourse in North America. In the processes of cultural negotiations, re-definitions, and confrontation with a different culture, religious services are predicated along traditional, ethnic lines. Many centers hold programs in languages reflecting their countries of origins (Urdu, Persian, or Arabic). Due to this factor, Shi'is from different ethnic backgrounds feel that they are excluded from partaking in programs held at the ethnic centers.

Each of the ethnic group imposes its own distinctive understanding of how it experiences Islam and firmly believes it to be the true expression of Islam, even, at times, disparaging the experiences and praxis of other ethnic groups that share the same faith. The uniting factor within individual groups often seems to be a common language and national ties rather than religious affiliation as such, making efforts to create a federation of Shi'a communities under a single leadership marginal or largely ineffective. Thus, Shi'is often mediate religion through an endorsed ethnicity.

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[57] Sulayman Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1999), 97.

The predominance of Shi'i ethnic centers is supported by the survey. Figure 1 in appendix two indicates that of all the institutes surveyed, almost 44 per cent of the attendees were from Iran. Twenty seven per cent of the centers surveyed were frequented by members from India and Pakistan, and about fifteen cent came from Arab countries. Five per cent came from Iraq.

The overwhelming presence of Iranian Shi'is in the North American milieu is further highlighted in figure two in appendix two. It shows that, of the centers surveyed, thirty two per cent of the centers were of Iranian origins. Twenty eight per cent of the centers were Indo-Pakistani and another twenty eight per cent were from other Arab countries.

It is important to bear in mind that the ethnic factor is more accentuated in Shi'ism than in Sunnism. This is because whereas Sunni religious events are confined to daily or weekly prayers in which Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds congregate, the Shi'i calendar is punctuated with events marking the birth and death dates of imams.[58] The various Shi'i communities commemorate these events differently. Thus, Pakistani Shi'is who congregate at the *Husayniyya*[59] mark events like the martyrdom of Imam Husayn b. 'Ali, the grandson of the Prophet (S.A.W.), differently from the way that Iraqi or Iranian Shi'is do. Shi'is

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58 See also Vernon Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 71.

59 *Husayniyya* refers to a place where Shi'is congregate to commemorate the death and birthdays of the imams and other festivals. It is distinguished from a mosque in that rules governing ritual purity of mosques are not applied there.

from the Indian sub-continent and East Africa re-enact the events in Kerbala with their own culturally generated symbols and modes of expressions. These include representations of the flag of 'Abbas (*'alam*) and the cradle of Imam Husayn's six month old child. These symbolic representations of events in Kerbala are alien to Arab and Iranian Shi'is. Acts of venerating, kissing, and expressions of reverence to these symbols are often rejected by Shi'is from the Middle East who view them as subtle forms of idolatry. We have observed some altercation between different ethnic groups due to the presence of such symbols in the centers.

The view that Sunnis mosques are more ethnically diverse than Shi'i centers is corroborated by a report issued recently by the Council of American Islamic Relation (CAIR). The report is primarily focussed on Sunni mosques. According to the report's primary researcher, Dr. Ihsan Bagby, 'One of the most significant findings in this survey is that mosques are quite ethnically diverse.' Bagby noted that 93 per cent of all mosques are attended by more than one ethnic group. Only seven per cent of the mosques are attended by only one ethnic group and almost ninety per cent of all mosques have some South Asians, African Americans, and Arabs.[60] These figures further highlight the difference between the Sunni and Shi'i experience in North America. They indicate that ethnicity is a more pervasive phenomenon in the North American Shi'i community.

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[60] See Council on American-Islamic Relations, *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait*, 3.

The linguistic and cultural bias of programs held at the centers also means that Shi'i communities often experience Islam in a culturally conditioned form, marginalizing them from other Shi'is of different ethnic origins. Appendix one indicates that many centers hold programs in languages that reflect their countries of origins (Urdu, Persian or Arabic) thus alienating Shi'is from a different cultural or linguistic background. The predominance of ethnic centers has also meant that integration within the Shi'i community is confined to those members originating fr their own ethnic backgrounds. There are few inter-ethnic marriages and few Shi'is have Shi'i friends outside their own ethnic background. As a matter of fact, African-American converts often complain that, having converted to Shi'ism, they are discriminated against by both Sunnis and their fellow Shi'is.

The ethnic characterization of Shi'i Islam reflects the pluralistic North American ambience and the part played by ethnic minorities in shaping the North American social and religious pluralism. In spite of the common beliefs and practices that characterize the global Shi'i community, the unity of the umma evaporates in the face of ethnic, linguistic, and national differences. The affirmation of ethnocentrism militates against the universalistic ideals of Islam and globalization of the Islamic *umma*. Moreover, the ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity of the Shi'i community emasculates the vision of an egalitarian circle of believers coalescing around Islamic principles. Indeed, more than any other factor, it is the ethnic factor that seems to have kept

Shi'ism from becoming a dominant and shared source of identity.[61]

It is only in smaller Shi'i communities that pluralistic centers can be found. In communities such as those established in Cleveland, Indianapolis, Seattle, Denver, and Austin, the ethnic divide is almost non-existent as different ethnic Shi'i groups coalesce under the common banner of the *ahl al-bayt*, the progeny of the Prophet (S.A.W.). Others may even hold joint religious programs with local Sunni communities. However, even in such multi-ethnic centers, there is much tension as different groups try to impose their understanding and articulation of Shi'ism. Thus, there are frequent disputes regarding what speakers to invite, what kind of food to serve, whether men and women should be seated in the same room, whether symbols like '*alam*, *julus*,[62] *shabih* (replicas), can be exhibited in the programs, whether and how to perform acts of flagellations, etc.

Similarly, We observed much tension in one center engendered by a debate as to whether *tabarra'* (which was understood by some to refer to the explicit cursing the enemies of *ahl al-bayt)* was to be undertaken during the programs or not. Some clearly felt that the center should replicate the old tradition of cursing the enemies of the family of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

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[61] Marilyn Waldman, "Reflections on Islamic Tradition, Women and Family" in E. Waugh, S. M. Abu-Laban, R Qureshi , eds., *Muslim Families in North America* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1991), 319.

[62] This refers to the public processions marking the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. In some cultures, the term is used to refer to the cradle of Imam Husayn's six-month old son who was also martyred in Kerbala.

whereas other members favored accentuating the more positive *tawalla* (stressing the virtues and following the examples of the Prophet and his family). The issue of the cursing of the first three caliphs proved to be a major source of division in the community.

Migration and the Shi'i Community

Even in the smaller, multi-ethnic Shi'i communities, the arrival of newer migrants has impinged on the North American Shi'i centers. As a matter of fact, many immigrants refuse to accept America as their permanent home and hope to return to their native lands after significant economic gains. While in America, they continue to speak their native languages, refuse to integrate in the mainstream American society, and often restrict their interaction to members of their own ethnic groups.

Immigrant Shi'is tend to experience Islam through a cultural prism that is highly resistant to change. In their centers, Islam is mediated in a culturally conditioned form. The immigrants decide on how the mosques are to be run, what are an acceptable dress code, language, and political behavior. In addition, they have imposed their authority on indigenous Muslims. Thus, the increase in the Shi'i immigrant population has meant that all that was alien to the immigrants' homeland customs and rituals was seen as alien to Shi'ism itself.

Newer immigrants tend to revive traditional norms and impose a conservative and extraneous expression of Islam. Immigrants also emphasize the public demonstration of Islam, the segregation of sexes, and a general disdain of North American

culture and norms. Shi'i immigrants also insist on a replication of rituals and mosque services that have often been imported from abroad. Such measures are often resisted by those members who have lived in America for a long period. Thus, much tension is exhibited in many centers.

In addition, newer immigrants also bring a more intense form of Shi'ism, one whose discourse is frequently more polemic, re-asserting thereby the traditional demarcating lines between Shi'ism and Sunnism. Increased migration of the Muslim community has also engendered increased tensions between the Sunnis and Shi'is in North America. The North American Shi'i community is reconstituted in a different environment in which the Shi'is form a conglomerate of disparate ethnic groups. This confluence of Shi'is sharing common space has proved to be problematic.

A question in the survey was related to the tension experienced between maintaining a distinct Shi'i identity and being a Muslim in North America. It is noticeable that centers located in areas where there is a small Shi'i population are more willing to identify themselves with the larger Muslim community than those Shi'is living in places like New York or Washington where support from the community is much greater. Thus, one respondent stated: "Whilst our mosque is Shi'a, our doors are always open to all Muslims. This is necessary in such a small community." While not denying their Shi'i penchant, smaller communities are more likely to downplay their Shi'i predilections than larger ones. This is also done to overcome the disadvantage

of being in a double minority status, that is, Shi'i Muslims are not only disadvantaged (and thus in a minority) because they are Muslims but are also further discriminated against because they are Shi'is.

For a community that exists as a distinct minority within the minority Muslim community in North America, the sense of alienation is heightened as the identity of its members is hyphenated and broken into many components. The identity of a Shi'i originating from Pakistan, for example, would be a Pakistani - Shi'i - Muslim – North American. It is to be remembered that the problem of identity confronting the Shi'is in North America is greater than that facing the Sunnis. This is because the Shi'is seek not only to assert their Islamic identity in the West but also to maintain their own distinct Shi'i identity. It is therefore correct to say that as North American Shi'is resist assimilation to both the mainstream North American and the Sunni community, the Shi'is are in a double (and sometimes even triple) minority status.

Services in the Shi'i Centers

Appendix one lists the centers together with the dates when they were established. It is important to note that more than forty two per cent of the centers were established in the 1990s. This indicates that the Shi'i community in North America is relatively young. Seventeen per cent of the centers were established in the 1980s and fourteen per cent in the 2000s. Another significant point that is revealed in appendix one is that only two per cent of the centers were established in the 1970s. Instead of building

centers of worship, the early Shi'i communities met in people's houses. It was only when more Shi'is arrived in the 1980s that Islamic centers were instituted.

This observation is highly significant, for it indicates that many centers in North America are still in the process of consolidation, building up their membership, meeting the increasing needs of their members, paying off debts and are more concerned with meeting their financial obligations than with establishing links and engaging in dialogue with non-Muslims. Thus, as we will see, few Shi'i centers are actively engaged with outreach activities.

In contrast to this, a recent report published by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) indicates that the founding year of Sunni mosques ranges from 1925 to 2000. Two percent were founded prior to 1950. Half the mosques surveyed were founded by 1980 and the other half were founded after that. The vast majority of existing mosques (eighty seven percent) have been established since 1970.[63] Since they were established earlier, Sunni mosques are better organized, tend to have more resources, and are better equipped to cater for the increasing needs of the community.

The appendices attached to this study merely state statistical figures. They do not reveal the feelings and views of Shi'is who were interviewed. The survey asked those were interviewed for their comments on certain issues. The comments

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[63] See Council on American-Islamic Relations, *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait*, www.cair-net.org (April 2001) 3, 24.

cited in the survey indicate that the importation of extraneous cultures has engendered considerable tensions within the Shi'i community. These tensions are discernible in the running of the centers. The survey indicates that in many centers, basic services are conducted along the same lines that were held in their home countries, with little or no concern for the needs of the members in this milieu.

Figure 2 in appendix three corroborates the point made above i.e., most centers provide the basic services. Thus, most programs are held on Thursday nights. In addition, the centers celebrate the birth and death of the imams and hold Friday prayers. Since most of the centers are quite young, many do not provide funeral services or open their mosques to non-Muslims. Only sixteen per cent engage in inter-faith dialogue and only two per cent correspond with Shi'a inmates in correctional facilities. The fact that the centers are introverted and provide only the most basic services to their communities can be seen from the fact that only two per cent provide welfare services to its members, four per cent have adult education, and nine per cent have a functional library (appendix three, figure 2). The Shi'i community is still in a state of transition and growth, a fact that is clearly born out by our survey.

Appendix four further corroborates the point that most centers are content to provide basic services to the community. A question was posed regarding the success of the programs held. The importance of an event is the most significant point that determines the size of the audience. Thus, most people attend only

during the important dates in the Shi'i calendar. The speaker at the event features next, nine per cent said that the speaker determines the size of the crowd. The survey further indicates there is a correlation between facilities offered and success of events. Wherever good facilities are offered, the success rate is seen to be higher. Besides the facilities, the success of the programs is also contingent on good English speakers, proper timing of events and, of course, food. Some centers were honest enough to admit that mosque politics was driving members away.

The imposition of an alien and imported culture in the centers has estranged the youths in the Shi'i community. More significantly, programs held at the centers do not seem to be capable of generating or sustaining interest even within their own ethnic members especially amongst the younger generation. This is due to the linguistic barriers and also due to the ritualization of religious practices, a point which alienates many members of the community.

The 'intellectually inclined' adults and the younger generation reject the ancestral traditions and demand changes in the format of the programs offered. This observation is corroborated by the fact that the average crowd for Thursday night lectures in many centers is normally only 20-30 people. Thus, according to the survey, the division is not only between the different centers, but also within the centers as different groups impose their own vision and expression of Islam. Significantly, the survey also indicates that many centers are slowly adapting to English as a medium of communication. The older the

institutions, the more they try to incorporate English in their services. It is to be noted however, that younger centers still adhere to the 'mother languages'.[64]

There is another reason that segments the various Shi'i groups in North America. Unlike Sunni Islam, there are no federations of mosques or nationwide organizations that would unite the diverse Shi'i associations and centers. There is no Shi'i equivalent of the Muslim Students Association (MSA) or the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Within the Sunni community, these institutions have been instrumental in fostering national and international ties among Muslims of all national origins and ethnicities. ISNA, for example, helps individuals from different ethnic groups to meet in its conferences and encourages its members to associate with other ethnically defined Muslims. Recently, the Universal Muslim Association of America (UMAA) has been established in an effort to bring together Shi'is from different ethnic, cultural and national background. However, as we will discuss in chapter four, UMAA is still at an embryonic stage and has yet to be fully accepted or integrated in the Shi'i community. Hence, so far, UMAA has remained a largely peripheral body.

For North American Shi'is, the challenge is not only in defining the mode of interaction with the outside world, but also

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[64] Most Khoja centers have adopted English as their medium of communication in their lectures. As an example, the Ja'ffari Islamic Center in Toronto conducts 95% of it's lectures in English. Similarly, I found that many centers in Dearborn now have services in English although there is clearly some resistance from the senior members of the community. I have also found that many Pakistani centers are, generally speaking, more geared toward providing services in Urdu.

how to engage with Shi'is from other ethnic communities. Due to the challenges outlined above, a Shi'i becomes 'the other' even within his/her own community. As we will discuss, the significance of the ethnic factor in North American Shi'ism can be discerned from a comparison of the various Shi'i communities.

The Centers and the Youth

In this section, we will focus on some of the challenges confronting the Shi'i community in North America. Second generation Muslims, or the youths, are a very important component of the Muslim community in North America as they are the future leaders of the community. Hence, many centers are very concerned about the religious values transmitted to the next generation. Parents are also concerned about the spiritual well being and moral rectitude of their children. Before discussing how the centers have dealt with issues related to the youth, it would be helpful to draw on the results of a survey that was conducted in Toronto, Canada. The sample features the youths, the majority of whom were born outside of Canada and, on average, have lived in the country for more than ten years.

One of the questions in the survey related to the youths' understanding of Islam and how much religion regulated their lives. The survey shows that those youths who have lived in Canada longer do not see Islam to be a complete way of life. This is in contrast to Muslim belief, which maintains that Islam should regulate all their lives.[65] Twenty nine per cent of the youths

[65] The survey on the Shi'a youth in Toronto is incorporated in a book that marks an important milestone in

surveyed felt that Islam is out of date.[66] Furthermore, those who have lived in Canada longer found it more difficult to adhere to Islamic practices.[67]

As far as other forms of religious practices are concerned, a question was asked regarding the wearing of *hijab*, the covering over the head. Six to eight out of ten youths said they would encourage the wearing of *hijab* or of keeping a beard.[68] Perhaps the most startling statistics are the following: Almost half the youths felt that alcohol consumption and premarital sex were widespread among the youths whereas a third thought that casino gambling and drug use were widely prevalent.[69] Many of these youths personally knew peers who were engaged in such activities. This may be a reflection of some of the pressures that Muslim youths are confronted with in the North American milieu.

Another question asked the youths regarding their level of involvement within the community. This was seen as an indicator of their willingness to help improve the institutions so that they better serve their needs. Only over a third were very or somewhat involved, but a quarter were very willing and another half (for a total of three-quarters) were somewhat willing to remain, or to get involved. The

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understanding the youth predicament in North America. See *Muslim Youth at the Crossroads: Advancing into the Twenty First Century*, ed., Sadik Alloo (Toronto: Hyderi, 1995), 61.

[66] Ibid., 62.

[67] Ibid., 63.

[68] Ibid., 68.

[69] Ibid., 71-72.

involvement is higher among younger youths and those who have attended madrasa longer. The majority of the youth stated that they would be willing to invest one to two hours a week in communal activities. The survey also suggests that youths who have been here for a longer period are more disillusioned with the community and do not necessarily feel a sense of obligation to contribute to the community. In addition, they do not feel a sense of belonging to the centers. This corroborates the point we made previously, that many youths cannot relate to the centers and feel marginalized and even alienated from them.

Another question attempted to measure the youths' perception of the lectures in the mosque and the Sunday school (*madrasa*). Two thirds of the youths surveyed perceived the lectures in the mosque and *madrasa* to be very effective. A question was also asked regarding their reaction if Islam was attacked. Fifty per cent said they would defend Islam if it was attacked, another twenty per cent said they would be proud to tell others about their religion whenever they could. About thirty per cent said they would rather leave their religious affiliations to themselves or felt that they were Muslims because they happen to be born in a Muslim family.[70]

The survey provides unmistakable evidence of the future direction and needs of the community. Youths who are older and or have lived in Canada longer are more likely to have moved away from viewpoints that Islam seeks to inculcate. This is a reflection of the length of exposure to

[70] Ibid., 81-82.

Western influences. It also suggests that the parents and Islamic centers have not been able to transmit Islamic norms to the next generation effectively.

The greatest problem that the youths identified was the difficulty of abiding by Islamic morals in a Western society. This was reflected in the decreasing proportions of youths who would discourage wearing of T-shirts with pictures of partly exposed girls, through participation of girls in beauty contests, to learning to play a musical instrument. While it is possible that smaller proportions would themselves engage in such behaviours, the fact that they were not prepared to discourage such practices in a survey, let alone in the real world, show that their religious convictions are less than firm.

Another question in the survey was connected to the more delicate issue of interaction with members of the opposite sex and, more specifically, to where youths would draw the line in the development of a closer relationship. A substantial majority said they would freely interact with members of the other sex, though only about a third would go as far as dating and a fifth would want to become intimate.[71] While these proportions may be considered relatively modest, sexual association that goes beyond verbal interaction could lead to improper or corrupt behaviour.

Youths appear much more confident on issues of ethical behaviour. According to the survey, just as many

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[71] Ibid., 83.

think it is relatively easy to adopt Islamic ethics as it is to uphold Islamic beliefs in a Western environment. However, they are more likely to do "*nahy an al-munkar*," forbid the evil -- for example, when a close friend or relative does drugs or steals -- than to do "*amr bil-maruf*," enjoin the good — for instance, when he or she does not fast during the month of Ramadhan or eats *haram* food outside of the home. This is probably because the bad may be so grievous or repugnant that there is no hesitation to counsel so as to correct his/her behavior. But the good may be construed as interference in personal matters, or may not be seen to constitute serious transgressions. Even here, Western values seem to have diluted the ethical standards that Islam seeks to promote. Such statistics are important because they relate some of the most important issues that the Muslim community is confronted with. They also point to where the community's emphasis ought to lie.

The survey is a clear indication of the feelings and perceptions of young Muslims in Canada. It shows the ambivalent attitude of the youths towards both Islam and the Shi'i community. The survey also suggests that the community has not paid as much importance as it should to the needs and perceptions of the younger generation. The lack of participation by the younger generation in the centers has concerned many parents, leading to a re-examination of the types of programs offered in the centers so as to attract them to the centers. This issue was also highlighted in the survey we conducted.

A question was posed in the survey regarding the needs of the centers. Most institutions view the establishment of youth programs to be among their most pressing needs. Seventy percent of the institutions interviewed said they plan to organize events that would attract the younger generation within the community. However, many seem perplexed as to how to attract the youths to the centers.

A remark in one of the responses is worth noting: "Muslim youths are more attracted by American rather than traditional Muslim events. Thus, they are more likely to be attracted to retreats, recreational camps, picnics and debates than sermons and prayers." These are important points to remember in order to resolve a major dilemma confronting almost all Shi'i centers in North America. Within the Shi'a community, there is a paucity of events that attract the youths. Youths reject what is posited as "normative Islam" imposed by the adult immigrant community. They are more concerned to differentiate between the prevalent adult culture and Islam as a religious phenomenon. This suggests a paradigm shift from an old, culturally imposed mentality to a distinctly North American mindset. In our interaction with the youths, many have told us that they distinguish between "our Islam" and "the true Islam." Many youths feel that the adults cling on to an Islam that is culturally conditioned, one that is formed by the "back home mentality" and one which the youths cannot identify with and often reject.

Tensions generated by intergenerational differences are further exacerbated by the fact that many Muslim youths are now

trained in universities and colleges where they appropriate a distinctly North American culture and are exposed to ideas that challenge traditional concepts and teachings. In addition to there being no interaction with preachers in the centers, the lectures are either delivered in languages that are alien to the youths or they are in the form of repetitive and highly polemicized discourses, quite distinct from the much more objective, intellectual challenges the youths are accustomed to in the universities.

The immigrant adult population prefers to cleave to the imported ancestral traditions and cultural practices rather than cede to the demands of modernity. The younger generation, on the other hand, has appropriated a distinctly American culture engendering much friction within the centers. A new culture appears to be spreading among Muslim youths – the North American culture. As one youth states: "We are less likely to identify with the home-sick mosque culture and more likely to assert a very active political role for the Islamic center, and to do it as an American Muslim community – not as Egyptian, Pakistani or Malaysian Expatriates, but as Americans."[72]

Many community members (especially the youths) are disappointed by the fact that there is no dialogue in most centers. Clearly, the centers need to design their services so that the audience are more receptive to the lectures and become active participants rather than being mere passive recipients of knowledge. Some centers have tried to overcome the 'ritualization' problem by

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[72] Steven Barboza, *American Jihad: Islam after Malcolm X* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 58.

providing appropriate translations of supplications, by encouraging youths to speak before the main lectures, and by providing question/answer sessions after the lectures. In Toronto, the Ja'ffari Islamic Center even opened a Thursday night religious school running simultaneously with the main adult program. This has led a significant increase in the attendance on Thursday nights. In other centers in Dearborn and Los Angeles, Imams al-Hasan and Mustafa Qazwini hold special youth sessions on Friday nights where, after a lecture is delivered, youths are able to deliberate on the lectures and question the speakers. These interactive sessions have proved to be very popular weekly events.

As with Sunni mosques, Shi'i centers have had to adapt to the new ambience so as to attract more members. Services and rituals are to be re-formulated to facilitate a North American articulation of Islam. The older institutions incorporate English in their services and favor programs that appeal to the younger generation. This is a reflection of the shift in dynamics within these institutions. At the Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn, Michigan, members congregate in the auditorium and sit on pubes during the services while the Imam of the center, Imam Muhammad 'Ali Ilahi, delivers his lectures standing at a podium rather sitting on a pulpit. In some centers, traditional supplications on Thursday nights and during the months of Ramadhan are recited in the vernacular instead of the traditional Arabic language.

Another notable feature of North American Shi'i institutions is that more centers are building community centers

rather than traditional places of worship. This is done with the explicit aim of incorporating recreational events to attract the younger generation in their activities. Community leaders have come to the realization that one of the best ways to bring the youth back to the community is by offering recreational facilities and making the centers a 'fun' place to be. It is at the community centers that the youth can both play and pray. In these centers, gymnasiums and facilities for playing soccer, volleyball and badminton are offered. Increasingly, more centers are paying attention to the youths within the community.

Women in the Islamic Centers

The problem of active participation in the centers is also relevant to young women within the Shi'i communities. In most centers, women are partitioned off in a separate room where they can neither interact with the speaker not contribute to the proceedings. It is correct to state that in most centers in North America, women are not well represented. Most centers do not have a ladies committee, or if they do, they are not represented in the boards or executive councils. Women hardly participate or have a say in the running of activities of the centers. Their participation is, generally speaking, limited to catering for meals when events are held. The fact that women are not included in the events can be seen from appendix seven. Of the fourteen centers surveyed in this questionnaire, only three stated that women are seated in the same room as men with no partition. Seventy eight per cent of the centers stated that women are not seated in the same room as men,

or if they are, a partition separates men from women. Hence, in many centers, women are barred from interacting with or participating actively in the programs.

Special programs for women are arranged in only a small proportion of the centers. However, increasingly, centers are becoming more aware of the need to give women more 'space' and opportunities to participate in the running of the centers. Appendix six indicates that more women participate in the centers, serve on boards, and participate in the running of the programs. Twenty two per cent stated that women serve on boards, and twenty eight per cent said women can participate in the programs In Dearborn, Michigan, women are seated in the same room as men in many centers and are able to fully interact in the proceedings. There is no partition kept even at the time of eating. We have found that more centers are willing to change so as to accommodate the youth and women although there is considerable resistance to gender-mixing from senior members of the community.

In many centers in Dearborn, women are playing increasingly prominent roles. At one center, women recite supplications in front of men, a feat that would not be accepted in other traditional centers. In a center in Los Angeles, women are allowed to question the speaker during his sermon. In the Ja'ffari Islamic Center, in Toronto, the chairlady is a voting member of the six-person executive committee. In some centers in Denver, women sometime deliver lectures in front of the men.

Although it is difficult to generalize, it is appropriate to state that those centers that are more tied to homeland cultures (Pakistani and some Iraqi) tend to exclude female participation in events where males are present whereas centers with less cultural attachments encourage women to participate in the various genres of programs offered.

A corollary to the issues discussed above is the need for training Muslim councillors. The Muslim community is continuously confronted with youth, marital, familial and business problems. Presently, there are few qualified Muslim counsellors. Non-Muslim counsellors are not sensitized to Muslim religious needs or cultural values. Investing in our own counsellors will be an important step in resolving some of the issues confronting members of the community.

Other Challenges in the North American Shi'i Community

As previously noted, most of the institutions in North America are relatively new. Thus, in most immigrant communities, the seniors are still largely neglected especially as they form a small section of the populace. It is quite normal for a young, immigrant community to ignore the needs of seniors.

This fact is highlighted in appendix six. Only two per cent said that seniors have their own committees or groups, and eight per cent provide for the needs of the seniors. One of the questions posed in the survey was: "How far do you cater for the seniors in the community"? Most centers did not respond to the question. One

center stated: "We provide them with chairs to sit on." As the community gets older, the number of senior citizens and their needs will inexorably increase. Some centers have their own seniors committee which organize day trips during the summer, classes in English, light recreation, religious films, lectures, and various discussion groups that are oriented specifically for the needs of the elder generation.

A question in the survey also related to the current and future challenges of the centers. The results further corroborate the point that, since the centers were established quite recently, most are engaged in an ongoing struggle to become financially stable. Appendix five, figure 1, indicates that sixteen per cent of the centers surveyed identified financial stability as the most important current challenge. Nine per cent of the centers stated that acquiring a facility and/or adding to the current facility were the most important challenges. These two factors were also identified as future challenges. In response to a question, a center stated: 'Until recently, we had only 10-15 families from India and Pakistan. In the last 3-4 years many families arrived from Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Many are students from Iran and others are refugees from Iraq. Most of the population is young and struggling economically.' Due to the financial constraint, the services the centers provide are inadequate. The arrival of newer immigrants puts a major strain on the financial resources of a center, especially if these immigrants are students or refugees. Clearly, this is an important current and future challenge that centers are seeking to overcome.

Interestingly, the survey indicates that a new element has entered as a future challenge. Centers are clearly worried about the youth within the community. Appendix five, figure two indicates that five per cent identified the transmission of Islam to the future generation as a future challenge, an equal number saw the acquisition of a resident alim (or Imam) as an important future challenge.

Summary of Challenges

The following is a summary of the survey. Most Shi'i centers are established along ethnic lines. The programs held at these centers reflect the countries of origins. They also offer genres of programs that attract members from their own ethnic background. This factor tends to marginalize Shi'is from different ethnic backgrounds. It also excludes converts to Shi'i Islam.

Most centers provide basic services – Thursdays, Friday, Sunday schools. However, Thursday nights have exceptionally low turn out. In many centers, only ten to fifteen people attend the services. Many centers complain that there is a paucity of good speakers. The older the institutes are, the more open they are to the outside world. They are more willing to incorporate English lectures, to engage in the political process and to dialogue with Christians and Jews. The success of the program is contingent on good facilities, good speaker, food, and the proper timing of events.

There is a rift between immigrant Muslims and those who are born here. This is reflected in the low attendance by the youths in the centers. Seventy per cent of the centers have plans

or plan to have programs for youths, but are not sure what will attract them. Thus, they have not identified specific programs for the youths. Some have suggested holding North American style rather than traditional programs – retreats, camps, and dialogue. In addition, the content of the lectures delivered in many centers is not suitable for the new North American ambience.

The second generation Muslims have adopted a North American culture. Thus, there is a rift between the migrants who bring their home culture and the youths who have adopted a distinctly North American culture. This is visible in their modes of dressing, the type of food they eat, the language they speak and the peers they choose. Some centers have even organized youth committees, hotline services where youths organize their own events and activities. Shi'a youths are alienated not only in the mosques but also from the University campuses. Many are discriminated against by the Sunnis due to their Shi'i affiliations.

Most centers see divisions and friction within their communities as a major challenge. These divisions arise due to ethnic differences, or due to the elder generation wanting to replicate services from 'back home' whereas the younger generation tend to avoid such services. There is also a division between those who are more open and willing to implement changes and those who want to preserve their traditions.

Where there is a smaller Shi'a community, it is more willing to identify itself with the larger Muslim community, to overcome the disadvantage of being in a double minority status. Many centers are introverted and inward looking. They are more

concerned to provide essential services to members, rather than to provide the kinds of programs demanded by the youths or to cater for converts and outsiders. Few institutions have a grand vision or a fully-fledged library. Most centers do not engage in major inter-faith activities. Communication with the media is not stressed; rather, providing basic services to the community is the major goal. Most do not seem to have a clearly articulated vision. The problem of a parochial vision is compounded by a dearth of full time staff and financial resources.

For the future, there is a need for a Shi'i institute that will define the visions and directions that the community should head towards. This institute can be envisaged as an umbrella organization, which will encompass and embrace all the major Shi'i centers under the supervision of scholars and community leaders. This will ensure that organizations learn from the experiences of other centers. It will also avoid duplication of resources and activities.

Most organizations do not have women on their boards. Women are permitted to be involved in the life but not the organization and running of the institutions. In many centers, women are not allowed to elect the president and committee members of the centers.

The Different Ethnic Groups: The Iraqis

As we mentioned above, the North American Shi'i community is characterized by different ethnic groups and division along ethnic lines. In this section, we will look at the salient feature of some of the Shi'i communities who have settled

in North America and some of the challenges they are confronted with.

Iraqi Shi'is who sought asylum in North America after the Gulf War renew ties with the homeland, importing, in the process, their own distinctive culture. Having lived in areas like Najaf and Kerbala where the *maraji'* reside, Iraqi Shi'is bring with them a deep sense of religious commitment that is not always shared by Iranian and Lebanese Shi'is.[73] The Lebanese originate from a more pluralistic and "open" background whereas many Iranians have been influenced by the Shah's modernization and Westernization programs. Hence their outlook and vision are quite different.

Since they have migrated here recently, the Iraqis have not established their own religious institutions. Thus, they have had to share centers with the Lebanese and Iranian communities leading to much altercations between the different groups. In one city, for example, Iraqi and Iranian Shi'is established a place of worship. However, disputes soon arose on issues such as the use of vernacular in the sermons, the types of food to be served, performance of rituals and other internal disputes. In Dearborn, to cater specifically for the growing Iraqi community, a separate Iraqi center appropriately called the 'Kerbala center' was established after the end of the Gulf War.

Given their strong religious and social background, the Iraqis have not assimilated to North American culture to the

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[73] Walbridge, *Without*, 211-3. Walbride reports a more intense and dramatic atmosphere during the 'Ashura commemorations after the arrival of Iraqis.

degree that other Shi'is have. Iraqi Shi'is visit the Islamic centers regularly and establish strong bonds with the representatives of the Shi'i religious authorities, the *maraji'*.

There are, of course, many exceptions to these observations. Some Iraqi mosques have a distinctly variant outlook. In an Iraqi based mosque in Pomona, Los Angeles, there is no gender segregation and women are encouraged to participate in the services and to address the congregation.[74] Other Iraqis are quite liberal in their outlook and promote a full integration in the North American society.

The Iranian Community: Assimilation

Many Iranians who have chosen to settle in North America are assimilated. Assimilation occurs when a cultural or ethnic group consciously changes its identity to accord with another group, recognizing the latter's cultural superiority, so that the merged group may advance socially or politically by partially or totally giving up its original ethnic and racial identity. Assimilation may lead to changes in one's religious and cultural outlook or even disintegration of one's own identity. It further leads to the absorption into a culturally homogeneous society. This blending into a foreign culture is often at the expense of the Islamic identity. Those who favor assimilation try to distance themselves from elements of their own identity that would differentiate them from mainstream North American society. For

[74] See for example, Ron Kelley, "Muslims in Los Angeles" in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.) *Muslim Communities*, 156.

them, living in the West also means a commitment to full integration in North American society.

Assimilation is also intertwined to cultural integration, a phenomenon that occurs when a culture increasingly upholds universalistic standards thus stimulating intimate interaction among people of diverse cultural orientations. Cultural integration occurs more readily in the liberal religious sphere in terms of multi-faith communication and cooperation with the "other".

The effects of assimilation and merger into a North American culture are evinced from the changing of names to the de-emphasizing of customs that would set people apart from others. Anglicization of names is a common phenomenon to new migrants who want to integrate themselves to the mainstream society. This is because it is an important survival mechanism that helps alleviate racial or cultural prejudices. In addition, anglicization is an important factor in the process of assimilation. For example, a person by the name of Rawshan is often called Ron and Khurshid is labeled 'Kate'.

In contrast to the Iraqis described above, many assimilated Iranians have minimal contact with the religion of their home country, attending mosques only when a close family member or friend dies. In a survey conducted by George Sabadh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, 54.7 per cent of Iranians surveyed said they did not observe religious practices and 48.2 per cent of their spouses also affirmed that they did not observe Islam even when they lived in Iran.[75] In fact, many young Iranians have become so influenced

[75] George Sabagh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, "Secular Immigrants: Religiosity and Ethnicity Among Iranian Muslims in Los Angeles"

by the West that they openly consume alcohol and pork and eschew all affiliations with the religious community. For many of these secular Iranians, Iranian culture is the primary source of definition and identity. Cultural identity, for them, is preponderant to their identity as Muslims.

Rather than visiting mosques they often attend Iranian cultural centers and commemorate important cultural events like *nawruz*, the beginning of the Iranian New Year. Few of these genres of Iranians would mark distinctive Shi'i events such as the death anniversary of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (AS) or the day of 'Ashura when Imam Husayn (AS) was killed in Kerbala. For example, in Los Angeles, a Persian beauty contest – minus bathing suit displays - was held during the emotionally charged Shi'i mourning month of Muharram.[76] In March 2006, the day of *arba'in* (the fortieth day after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn) coincided with the day of Nawrooz, the Persian New Year. Many assimilated or secular Iranians celebrated rather than mourned on that day.

For the secular Iranians, Islam with its dietary and other restrictions is seen as an impediment to full integration in North American society. In the survey conducted by George Sabadh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr cited above, only 4.3 percent of respondents and 9.0 percent of their spouses said they always or often

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in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities*, 451.

[76] Ron Kelley, "Muslims in Los Angeles" in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities*, 148.

observed their religious practices in America[77] whereas only 3 per cent were involved in a religious organization.[78]

In contrast to the above group are fellow Iranians who also came to America after the revolution but fully support the revolution and share its ideals. Many of them are students at various Universities who promote and filter the ideology of the Islamic republic. Due to their pro-government political stance, the religiously devout Iranians are alienated not only from the larger North American society but are also estranged from their own community the majority of which is secularized. The devout Iranians regularly attend and participate in the religious activities of Islamic centers and are fully committed to bringing up their children as devout Muslims. In areas where there are no centers, they hold religious festivals in their basements, teach Sunday schools, and reach out to Shi'is from different ethnic backgrounds.

Iranian influenced is also exerted through the Iranian backed Muslim Student Organization Persian-Speaking Group (MSA-PSG). This is an organization of predominantly Iranian students and ex-students who were a part of the Muslim student Association (MSA) in the 1970s. With the increased tension between Sunnis and Shi'is, members of the MSA-PSG formed a separate group. MSA-PSG holds gatherings at various college and

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[77] George Sabagh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, "Secular Immigrants" in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities*, 451.

[78] Ibid., 453.

university campuses and sometimes in the houses of individual members.

The Lebanese Shi'is

Compared to the other Shi'i groups, the challenges confronting the Lebanese community are quite different. Since many of the Lebanese are third or fourth generation migrants, transmission of Islam to future generation has already appropriated a distinctive North American culture. As such, many Lebanese centers have devised novel ways to attract the youths back to the mosques. As mentioned above, women play a greater role in religious services and there is less emphasis on gender segregation in some centers in Dearborn. There are also more youth-friendly programs held in many centers in Dearborn.

Protracted experience in the North American environment has made the Lebanese realize the need to reach out to the North American community. The genre of religious programs offered at their centers has been re-structured to be more ecumenical and broad in outlook. For example, there is a greater emphasis on interfaith dialogue at the Islamic House of Wisdom (IHW). The IHW's ad book of 2001 carries a message from the Imam of the center, Muhammad 'Ali Ilahi. In this he states: 'Our friends and co-workers, the classmates of our children, our neighbors, our bosses, our elected officials – all these need to be educated to the truth and beauty of Islam in order that the Muslim community be effectively integrated into American life. We need to be educated ourselves, in order that we may distinguish between insulating

ourselves from the secular influences of American society and isolating ourselves from the rest of the world. That we cannot do, because we have a responsibility to propagate our faith, which isolation makes impossible.' Such comments are unlikely to be made by Imams from other Shi'i ethnic centers.

Many programs offered at the Lebanese centers are broadcast on local television stations and there is more emphasis to communicate with media. Moreover, local senators are frequently invited to participate in the programs. Members of the Lebanese community, both Muslims and Christians, are increasingly playing more active roles in American civil life. Abid Hamoud, a Lebanese attorney, ran for the post of mayor in Detroit. The Chief Executive Officer of the Ford Motor Company is Lebanese and the new President at the University of Miami is of Lebanese origins. According to the Imam of a center in Los Angeles, Imam Mustafa Qazwini, a congressman in Orange County is from Lebanon. It should be noted however, that some Lebanese centers are more introverted and insist on replicating traditional Shi'i services and rituals. The Dearborn based Majma', for example, advocates a very strict and at times literalist interpretation of Islamic law, strictly enforcing gender segregation and eschewing inter-faith dialogue.[79]

Although the Lebanese and Iraqis share the same language, they are culturally dissimilar. The Lebanese tend to adopt a less rigorous approach to legalistic Islam. More than one Imam has told us that this is due to the fact that the Lebanese have been

[79] Linda Walbridge, *Without Forgetting*, 59.

more exposed to a Western lifestyle and because they originate from a more pluralistic background. For example, during their weddings, the Lebanese tend to have mixed gatherings that are accompanied with music. The Iraqis, on the other hand, abstain from entertainment that involves music and enforce strict gender segregation.

Given the pluralistic milieu in Lebanon, the Lebanese have developed to become a more open and outward-looking community fostering, in the process, closer interaction with members of other-faith groups. Having come from the religious centers (*'Atabat*) recently, the Iraqis, on the other hand, are more entrenched in religious practices and tend to emphasize the ritual expression of Islam. The diverse backgrounds and outlooks between the Lebanese and Iraqi Shi'is have meant that there is much tension and differences between the two groups.

South Asian Muslims

The South Asian community is most closely tied to its culture and ethnic background. Although prayers and other traditional religious services are held to be important, ritualized services in Muharram, lectures, and the symbolic representation of Kerbala are also held in high esteem within the South Asian Shi'i community. Many South Asian Shi'is, for example, only visit their centers during the month of Muharram. Most of the services and liturgies are conducted in Urdu in highly ritualized forms resonating with the services in their countries of origins.

Many South Asian Shi'is also perpetuate the traditional Muharram rituals such as acts of public flagellation and inflicting wounds on their bodies. In March 2006, we observed a public procession in downtown Chicago as part of the *arba'in* program. Some participants from a local Shi'i community beat their chests forcefully in public, much to the bemusement of the local non-Muslim onlookers.

Very few centers organize programs that are oriented toward the youths or that reach out to other communities. Few South Asian centers encourage an active civic or political role for their members.

A single thread that links the diverse Shi'i groups to the larger tapestry of Shi'is coming to America is their love for the family of the Prophet and the performance of Muharram rituals. These rituals are marked annually in the *husayniyyas*. The *husayniyyas* have become important vehicles for importing and then sustaining extraneous cultures. By facilitating the performance of rituals endemic to a particular ethnic group, the *husayniyyas* tend to strengthen and amplify religious values. Thus, American Shi'is express their Islamic praxis in a form that is often culturally conditioned to the new environment. Since the rituals are experienced differently by the various religious groups, they tend to accentuate ethnic disparities.

South Asian Shi'is, for example, commemorate events like the death of Imam Husayn differently from the way that Iraqi or Iranian Shi'is do. Shi'is from the Indian sub-continent and East Africa re-enact the events in Kerbala with their own culturally

generated symbols and modes of expressions. They insist on having replicas or symbols of Kerbala in their centers. These include a *dharih* room, which contains a depiction of the horse of Imam Husayn and his sword. Included among the replicas are the symbolic representation of the flag of 'Abbas in the form of a palm, a cradle that symbolizes Imam Husayn's six month old child who was also killed in Kerbala, and other traditional replicas of shrines. These symbols draw one's attention to God, the Prophet and his family and evoke the central paradigm of Shi'i piety – allegiance to the family of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*.

In contrast, Lebanese, Iranian, and Iraqi centers exhibit a general disdain for such symbolic representations of Kerbala. Acts of reverence and devotion towards these symbols are perceived by Shi'is from other ethnic background as engagement in subtle forms of *shirk* (polytheism). Such cultural differences have engendered much tension between the diverse ethnic groups leading to the fragmentation of the Shi'i community.

It is to be remembered that the Muharram rituals are intrinsic to Shi'i piety and expression of love for the family of the Prophet. However, these very rituals have become a catalyst for generating differences within the North American Shi'i community. The symbolic representations described above are absent in Iranian and Arab centers which instead display slogans and writings of certain utterances of al-Husayn. Frequently, these slogans are aimed at evoking the political consciousness of the Shi'is. As Vernon Schubel states, 'While all Shi'a may agree that allegiance to the *ahl al-bayt* is crucial, there is a great deal of

disagreement over precisely how to manifest that allegiance. While the virtues of the Kerbala martyrs - courage, self-sacrifice, piety, devotion - are agreed upon, the proper means of articulating them are more controversial.'[80]

Shi'ism in North America manifests diversity within an overarching unity, a diversity that is reflected in the ethnic variances within the Shi'i institutions. It is the Muharram rituals that give North American Islam a distinctly Shi'i coloring for they differentiate Shi'is from Sunnis and all other Muslim sects. Paradoxically, the very institution that is supposed to unite Shi'i Muslims (the mosque and the rituals) becomes a catalyst for the perpetuation of a distinctive ethnic ethos.

For many South Asian Shi'is, the Muharram rituals are also interwoven with Shi'i identity in North America. In the survey, one of the institutions clearly linked fashioning a Shi'i identity with observing Muharram rituals. It stated: "We were the first to take out *julus* in North America.' Other South Asian Shi'is link their identity to performing acts of flagellation and to practicing *tabarra* (dissociation from and cursing of the first three Caliphs). These rituals engender a miniature South Asian environment in North America and accentuate an ethnic and often exclusivist expression of Shi'i Islam here.

Traditional South Asian expression of Islam is also accentuated by the phenomenon of 'imported Islam.' Like the Iraqis, South Asian Shi'is tend to import imams and *khutaba*'

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[80] Vernon Schubel, "The Muharram Majlis: The Role of a Ritual in the Preservation of Shi'a Identity in E. Waugh, S. M. Abu-Laban, R Qureshi, eds., *Muslim Families*, 128.

from their homeland. The *khutaba'* are often itinerant preachers who use the mosques as bases for inculcating Islamic values, bringing forth what they perceive to be normative Islam, encouraging public demonstration of piety and seeking to reinforce established patterns of behaviors like communal segregation of sexes. The *khutaba'* have been specifically trained to recite eulogies of the Imams, recounting their sufferings and persecution through history, and evoking the feelings of their audience by delivering emotionally charged sermons.

Iranian Shi'is listen to Persian-speaking preachers, while those from the subcontinent of India and Pakistan have their services and lectures held in Urdu. Although community leaders have adopted English as the administrative language of their respective groups, the use of other tongues for preaching and teaching has given rise to dual communal leadership and further segmented the North American Shi'i community. Such conflicts further jeopardize the welfare of these Islamic communities in the Western socio-political environment.

The Indo-Pakistani *khutaba'* regularly engage in anti-Sunni polemics in emotionally charged lectures that are delivered in the month of Muharram. The exposition of highly polemicized and politicized discourses and repeated affirmation of the historical injustices endured by the progeny of the Prophet helps mediate Shi'i Islam to the Shi'i community in North America. These lectures further seek to vindicate the verity and preponderance of Shi'i beliefs and liturgical practices.

Some *khutaba'* regularly engage in anti-Sunni polemics vindicating, in the process, the preponderance of Shi'i beliefs and practices. Although this genre of preachers is able to cater to the immigrant adult population by appealing to their emotions and reinforcing long held views on history, it has alienated the younger generation and other adults within the community who view such topics as irrelevant to their contemporary needs in North America.

Ironically, these preachers tend to amplify the ethnic factor in the services they render. Since they are not acquainted with North American socio-political issues and do not comprehend the endemic challenges that Muslim youths encounter in North America, the *khutaba*'s discourses are often confined to issues that are germane to the elder generation within their particular ethnic community creating, in the process, an obstacle to the allegiance to universal Islam and further alienating the youths from the centers. It is not an exaggeration to state that the South Asian Shi'i community seems to be the most resistant to initiate transformation in their centers, resulting in many youths and women being alienated from the community.

In contrast to the Lebanese centers described above, the extraneous culture imported by South Asian parents demands that women be partitioned off in a separate room where they can neither interact with a speaker nor contribute to the proceedings. Most South Asian centers do not have a ladies committee, or, if they do, they are not represented in the boards or executive councils. The participation of women is, generally speaking,

limited to catering for meals when events are held. Traditional South Asian culture enforces strict gender segregation and demands minimal female contribution.

Furthermore, women are not able to exercise voting powers in most South Asian centers. As a respondent said in an interview: 'Our women can elect the President of the United States, but they cannot elect the President of the local Islamic center.' In contrast, in the Lebanese, Iranian, and Khoja centers, women tend to play a more prominent role.

The Khoja Shi'is

Khoja Shi'is have a multiplicity of complex identities. Since the Khojas migrated from East Africa, they have brought with them some African culture. Khojas coming from Tanzania, for example, often communicate with each other in their native language, Kiswahili. Yet due to their Indian origins, they also speak Urdu or Gujarati and have appropriated the culture and values of the South Asian community. Living in North America has also seen them adopt elements of American identity and culture. Their South Asian culture is seen from the fact that their centers are structured along the same lines as the Pakistani and Indian mosques. They contain *dharih* rooms and other icons that are exhibited in the Indo-Pakistani centers.

In trying to accommodate traditional Islamic values and changing situations within the wider cultural context of American society, the Khojas have instituted certain reforms to meet the needs of contemporary times. To accommodate the needs of the youths, most lectures in the Khoja community are now delivered

in English instead of the traditional Urdu language. The Khojas have also trained in some indigenous Khoja scholars who have replaced 'imported' imams from India and Pakistan. Instead of flagellating themselves with iron chains on the day of 'Ashura, some members of the Khoja community donate blood to the Red Cross in the name of Imam Husayn.

Other transformations include the establishment of community centers that provide recreational facilities for the youths. In Toronto, the Ja'ffari Islamic Center purchased a twenty-five acre land in 1994. Here, they started a daily Islamic school, a weekend *madrasa*, and are now in the process of building a large community center which will include a banquet hall and recreational facilities. The Khojas have also updated the Sunday school curriculum to reflect the needs of the younger generation in a pluralistic milieu.

Compared to many other Shi'i communities, Khoja women tend to play a greater role in their mosques as they are well represented on the executive committees and organize separate events and lectures for women. A few years ago a woman was elected as President of the North American Shi'a Ithna-asheri Communities (NASIMCO).

In an attempt to unite the diverse ethnic Shi'i groups in North America NASIMCO was established by the Khoja community in Toronto in 1980. Twenty-four Canadian and American Shi'i communities comprising of about 10,000 people are currently members of NASIMCO. This is an umbrella organization that helps co-ordinate Shi'i religious and social

activities in North America. It is open to all Shi'a organizations regardless of their ethnic or cultural background and its stated aim is to propagate Islam according to the Ja'fari school of thought.

Among the goals of NASIMCO is to help establish religious schools for community members, to assist in publishing books and journals, and to educate non-Muslims regarding the tenets, doctrines, and practices of Islam. It is responsible for providing necessary religious guidance through regular contact with Shi'i centers of learning in Iran and Iraq, as well as financial support for capital projects undertaken by individual member communities. By acting as an umbrella organization, NASIMCO has also attempted to foster unity and promote religious, educational, social and economic amelioration of the communities. It has also financially supported the establishment of new centers in North America.

In addition, NASIMCO collects and then remits funds to sponsor indigent families and to build local hospitals and houses in countries like India and Somalia. The primary source of funding for NASIMCO are individual donations, subscriptions from member groups, and a portion of the religious tax of the *khums* collected with the permission of the *marja'*.[81] In recent years, some non-East African Shi'i groups have also joined NASIMCO in order to benefit from its financial and religious resources and its various services.

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[81] This refers to the Shi'i practice of giving a fifth of the net savings to a *marja'* or his representative.

The Khojas are known for their sense of discipline and organization. In 1976, they established a world body called the World Federation of Khoja Shi'a Ithna'asheri Jamaat in England. With the help of this world body, they have established numerous centers of worship throughout North America. The Federation's stated aim is to act as an umbrella organization, catering to the needs of the world Khoja community. The largest Khoja community in North America is in Toronto whereas the biggest Khoja congregation in America is in New York.

Khoja Shi'is have created an efficient religious education system for weekends. The most active wing of NASIMCO is the Islamic Education Board (IEB). The IEB hosts bi-annual conferences and has recently updated a syllabi for the *madrasa* (Sunday schools). It co-ordinates all educational activities between the different Sunday schools in North America and holds regular workshops and publishes newsletters for the benefit of *madrasa* teachers. In addition, the IEB has been responsible for introducing teaching techniques and newer courses like comparative religions and Islam in Modern Times.

However, so far NASIMCO has failed to unite the diverse ethnic Shi'i communities. Very few Pakistani institutions have joined forces with the Khoja organizations. Lack of resources and internal disputes have further undermined the activities of NASIMCO.

Conclusions

The preceding discussion indicates that the past two decades has witnessed diverse Shi'i communities migrating to North America. Like the rest of the Muslim community, the Shi'i community is characterized by diversity than homogeneity. The community includes immigrants who cleave to the tradition and culture of their ancestors. Cultural differences and perceived ways of responding to the Islamic message arise not only within centers but also among centers. The ethnic divide within the Shi'i community is most obvious in cities that have large Shi'i populations. Instead of integrated religious gatherings, it is the racial-ethnic identity that is accentuated in Shi'i mosques in North America.

Ethnicity and rituals endemic to a particular community have become the main categories of identification in North America. Diversity has made it difficult for Shi'i centers to create a common agenda to direct the lives of community members. In large cities like New York and Los Angeles, Iranian, Pakistani, Iraqi, Lebanese and Khoja mosques exist with little interaction between them.

For many communities in North America, the primary concern is how not to compromise the ideal of unity in Islam while still maintaining some degree of ethnic identity and cultural affiliation. Maintaining an ethnic identity in a multicultural community is natural. Identifying with a group with whom one shares a common origin, common experiences, memories, beliefs, and values is a means of self-definition and social location in a complex society. However,

ethnicity must not be made a sole category of identification for the North American Muslim society.

The struggle among North American Shi'is for the definition of the self, to give meaning to their new identity as North American Muslims, and to the new socio-political context of their existence is manifesting itself in tensions between the traditional and modern, intellectual and conservative, indigenous and immigrant, young and old and between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. The community also comprises youths and Afro-American converts who identify with a North American culture. Indigenous conflicts have arisen due to an immigrant community having to come to terms with an alien culture. Discussion about whether to assimilate with or isolate from the West has created much dissension between the adult and younger generation within the community.

Two levels of loyalty compete for the allegiance of the Shi'is – religious and ethnic. The major challenge has been how to maintain the unity of Islam while affirming ethnic identity and cultural affiliation. The net result has been the establishment of religious institutions along ethnic lines where Shi'ism is expressed in the form of variant extraneous cultural traditions. The ethnic division has been further accentuated by the absence of a singular centralized authority that could provide religious identity to encompass ethnic affiliations.

Although the Shi'i religious leaders (*maraji*)' have established religious centers, these have fragmented based on allegiance to the religious authorities. The Shi'is face the

challenge to reconstitute themselves into more Islamic and less ethnically stylized institutions. The Shi'is also need to foster interethnic social interaction and more pluralistic centers anchored on bonds of faith that would transcend other differences.

The Shi'is are also confronted with other dividing lines within the community. We have focused on the ethnic divisions. However, other demarcating lines are becoming increasingly apparent. Different circles are drawn based on interpretation of Islamic law, openness to North American society, and nationalistic fervor. Other dividing lines include tensions between conservatism and change, the dichotomy between preservation and reformation, and the discourse on gender segregation in the community. There is an obvious need for engagement in both external and internal pluralism within the North American Shi'i community.

In many ways, the Muslim community is experiencing the tensions and conflicts experienced by the Jewish community when it began to settle in America. Given the conflicts and divisions within the Muslim community, it is quite possible that it too will be divided along the same lines that the Jewish community was.[82] The challenge for the Shi'i population in North America is not only to engage in interfaith dialogue but also to initiate dialogue within the community. This extent of this challenge becomes more apparent when it is realized that the community has had to translate a majority religion to an area in which it is a nascent minority.

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[82] See Leo Trepp, *A History of the Jewish Experience*, (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1973), 299-316.

Chapter Three

Responses from the Community

This chapter lists the responses that were received from Shi'i various communities in North America. It cites figures such as when the centers were established, the number of people that frequent these centers, their ethnic composition, and the genres of programs that are held in the centers. The chapter also indicates some other important features of the centers. For example, it mentions if the centers have special programs for the youth and women, and some of the challenges that the centers currently encounter and their visions and aspirations for the future. These features are tabulated in the appendices attached at the end of the study.

It should also be added that the circumstances of the communities and the centers change regularly. Hence, although the figures cited in this chapter are accurate, some of the details may have changed as centers adapt to the North American environment by changing the location, form and genres of programs offered.

Name of Organization: **Aastane Zahra**

Address: Box 923, Englishtown

City: Englishtown State: NJ Zip: 07726

Phone: 732-446-0554

Contact: Sarfaraz Naqvi

Resident Alum: Y

Nos of People Involved: 300

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 16

Language of Programs: Urdu, English

Youth Programs: Participate in events, English lectures

Womens Programs: Own milad and other programs

Current challenges: add to current facility, financial stability, more English programs

Future Visions: new facility, regular attendance, transmit religion to youth

Da'wa Tabligh Work: some dialogue

Building (Rented/Own): Center

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Al-Ahad Islamic Center**

Address: 1500 Ridgeview Drive

City: Allentown,

State: PA Zip: 18104

Phone: (610) 398-1900

Contact: Hassan Jaffer

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas

Years of Existence: 30 years

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Youth Presentations

Womens Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: Reaching out to youth, getting them to participation

Future Visions: Getting an alim who can reach out to youth; a full time school, recreation center

Da'wa Tabligh Work: some inter-faith work

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Ahlul Bayt assembly of North America**

Address: Supercenter Postal Outlet

City: Markham State: Ont. Zip: L3R ON5

Phone: 905-707-1885

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians, Iraqis, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 10

Language of Programs: English, Farsi

Youth Programs: N

Womens Programs: Own lectures

Current challenges: Create unity among different groups

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Rent

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Bait al-ilm**

Address: 485 South Bartlett Street

City: Streamwood, State: IL Zip: 60107

Phone: 630-790-4989

Contact: Hasan Dossani

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 250

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis, Iranians

Years of Existence: 2

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: Yes

Womens Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: finding good speakers, address issues of contemporary Islam, making programs convenient to attend

Future Visions: Establish a model community in America, daily school, seminary to train ulama, fully fledged community center, resources for social and cultural needs.

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Not yet

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Banu Hashim Society**

Address: 4627 Full Moon Circle

City: Mississauga State: ON Zip: L4Z 2N7

Phone: 905-890-4877

Contact: Aijaz Bazmi

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis, Indians

Years of Existence: 8

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: N

Womens Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: Look forward to a better future

Future Visions: Arabic and Urdu classes, explain literature, larger center, better foundation for organization, maintaining Shia identity

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Distribute flyers, dialogue

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **The Holy Qur'an Institute**

Address: 7719 Schaefer Rd.

City: Dearborn State: MI Zip: 48126

Phone: (313) 582-7566

Contact: Shaykh Muhammad Jawad

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 60 students

Ethnicity of attendees: Arabs

Years of Existence: 2004

Language of Programs: Arabic

Youth Programs: Studies

Womens Programs: Studies

Current challenges: finance, facilities too small

Future Visions: Expand facilities; get more students, accreditation of courses taught

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	N
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	N
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	N

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Husseini Assoc of Manitoba Inc.**

Address: 59 Morningside Drive

City: Winnipeg State: Manitoba Zip: R3T 4A2

Phone: 204-269-6143

Contact: Syed Musarrat Naqavi

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq

Years of Existence: 23

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: few

Womens Programs: participate in all activities. Backbone of the community

Current challenges: lack of facilities, economic issues, regular attendance

Future Visions: increase facilities to accommodate everyone, provide religious instruction to children, promote religious understanding for others, resident alim

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Nil

Building (Rented/Own): House

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Husseini Islamic Center of Florida**

Address: 5211 Hester Avenue

City: Sanford State: FL Zip: 32773

Phone: 407-320-7006

Contact: Riyaz Jivraj

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 750

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas

Years of Existence: 1996

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Many activities

Womens Programs: Many activities

Current challenges: Youth to accept responsibility, more member participation

Future Visions: Create educated religious oriented and secular scholars to be able to share knowledge with any community they move to.

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Outreach programs, inter and intra-faith dialogue

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Idara e Jaferia**

Address: 3140 Spencerville Road

City: Burtonsville State: MD Zip: 20866

Phone:

Contact:

Resident Alim: Sayyid Naqavi

Nos of People Involved: 500

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 13

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: Many events which they arrange

Womens Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: funding for extension

Future Visions: active participation in weekly events

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Y

Building (Rented/Own): Own mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Imam Ali Center**

Address: 5511 Queens Blvd.

City: Woodside, NY, 11377 State: NY Zip: 11377

Phone: (718) 651-5888

Contact:

Resident Alim: Aghaye Islami

Nos of People Involved: 250

Ethnicity of attendees: Persian

Years of Existence: 20

Language of Programs: Persian, English

Youth Programs: Saturday Programs

Womens Programs: Saturday Programs

Current challenges: Finance, lack of space, esp. for madrasa, small library

Future Visions: Bigger facilities, more youth programs

Da'wa Tabligh Work: literature developed for correctional facilities

Building (Rented/Own): O

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Imam al-Khoei Islamic center**

Address: 89-89 Van Wyck Expressway

City: Jamaica, State: NY Zip: 11435

Phone: 718-297-6520

Contact:

Resident Alim: Shaykh Fadhel Sahlani

Nos of People Involved: 2, 500

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 30 years

Language of Programs: English, Urdu, Persian & Arabic

Youth Programs: Yes

Womens Programs: Own

Current challenges: Unity between groups

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Yes

Building (Rented/Own): Own Institute

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Imam e Zamana Foundation of N. America**

Address: 235 Georgia Road

City: Freehold State: NJ Zip: 07728

Phone: 908-308-3027

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 130

Ethnicity of attendees: India, Pakistan

Years of Existence: 16

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: Special events, youth speeches, educational programs for children

Womens Programs:

Current challenges:

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own):

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Iman Center**

Address: 6850 East Evans, #301

City: Denver State: CO Zip: 80224

Phone: 303-300-4700/303-691-5009

Contact: Naser Kalani

Resident Alim: Said Basem

Nos of People Involved: 80

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranian, Afghanis, Arabs, Americans

Years of Existence: 3

Language of Programs: Persian & English

Youth Programs: Every Sunday

Womens Programs: NA

Current challenges: Unity and more involvement

Future Visions: More participation on religious and cultural issues of Muslim Community

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Ahlul Bayt Association**

Address: 12460 Los Indios Trail,

City: Austin, State: TX Zip: 78729

Phone: (512) 291-9855

Contact:

Resident Alim: Yes

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistani, Iranians, Arabs, Converts

Years of Existence: 1997

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Special lectures and events

Womens Programs: Own tafsir programs

Current challenges: Cultural divine between ethnic groups, ma'tam, finances

Future Visions: Inter-faith activities, intra-faith, acquiring alim, increase youth leadership

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Extensive

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Association of Fort Wayne**

Address: Box 5471

City: Fort Wayne State: IN Zip: 46895

Phone: 219-749-1543

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150s

Ethnicity of attendees: Arabs, Iranians

Years of Existence: 17

Language of Programs: English, Arabic, Persian

Youth Programs: Materials for home learning

Women's Programs: Discussion groups

Current challenges:

Future Visions: respond to the needs of converts, teach children of identity, meet needs of community

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Outreach programs

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Center/Anjumane Asghari**

Address: 10301 Jefferson Highway

City: Brooklyn Center State: MN Zip: 55428

Phone: 763-424-4909

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 250

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas, Iranians, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 20

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: camps, special events, summer school, sports, halaka

Womens Programs: Own events, sports

Current challenges: financial stability, divisiveness in community, educate youth, involve din political process

Future Visions: Unity, finances, co-operate with non-Shi'as Muslims, maintain Shi'a values, provide social services to the community

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Y

Building (Rented/Own): Own mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Islamic Center of Ahl-Al-Beit**

Address: 201 S Lowell Blvd

City: Denver State: CO Zip: 80129

Phone: 720-981-4216

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 300

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians, Iraqis

Years of Existence: 17

Language of Programs: English, Arabic, Persian

Youth Programs: N

Womens Programs: N

Current challenges: Unity, brotherhood within community

Future Visions: greater participation, resident alim, finances

Da'wa Tabligh Work: n

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Center of America**

Address: 15571 Joy Rd.

City: Detroit State: MI Zip: 48228

Phone: 313-582-7443

Contact:

Resident Alim: Syed Hasan al-Qazwini

Nos of People Involved: 1000

Ethnicity of attendees: Lebanese and other Arabs

Years of Existence: 43 years

Language of Programs: English, Arabic

Youth Programs: Special programs on Friday nights

Womens Programs: Yes

Current challenges: More participation on regular basis

Future Visions: Bigger and better center,

Da'wa Tabligh Work: events for converts

Building (Rented/Own): Y

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Islamic Center of Beverly Hills**

Address: 505 South Beverly Drive

City: Beverly Hills State: CA Zip: 90212

Phone: 310-859-0404

Contact: Mirahmadi

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 2500

Ethnicity of attendees: Mainly Iranians

Years of Existence: 12

Language of Programs: English, Persian

Youth Programs: Monthly lectures

Womens Programs: Monthly meetings

Current challenges: to be included in shura

Future Visions: maintain unique identity, oppose assimilation, wear own customary clothes, reach out to brothers and sisters in prison

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Y

Building (Rented/Own):

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Center of Medina**

Address: Box 436,

City: Medina State: NY Zip: 14103

Phone:

Contact: Ghulam Mustafa

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 70

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 23

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: N

Womens Programs: N

Current challenges: New facility, attendance, resident alim, maintain Shi'a values

Future Visions: financial stability, unity in community, working with Sunnis, getting women involved

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Dialogue, visit non-Muslim centers, African – Americans visit center

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Center of Michigan**

Address: Box 710

City: Michigan City State: MI Zip: 46360

Phone: 219-879-9476

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Arabs, Iran, Pakistan

Years of Existence: 25

Language of Programs: English, Arabic, Persian

Youth Programs: Special events, Awards

Womens Programs: women's auxiliary

Current challenges: have imam, more attendance

Future Visions: inculcate faith in youth, finance, maintain membership, more growth

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: Islamic Center of Portland

Address: 4420 SW 110th Street

City: Beaverton State: OR Zip: 97005

Phone: 503 526 9305

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 120

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 25

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Camps, special events, classes

Womens Programs: own committee

Current challenges: add to current facility, financial stability, get resident alim, transmit religion to younger generation

Future Visions: resident alim, literature for non-Muslims, work with Sunnis involved in political process

Da'wa Tabligh Work: dialogue, contacts with inmates

Building (Rented/Own): House

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Education Center**

Address: 2313 S. Voss Street

City: Houston State: TX Zip: 77257

Phone: 713-787-5000

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 1000

Ethnicity of attendees: Persians, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 13

Language of Programs: English, Persian

Youth Programs: special events, camps, speeches

Womens Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: Unity

Future Visions: more participation on regular basis

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Y

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Education Center Hussaini**

Address: 2N121 Goodrich Ave

City: Glen Ellyn State: IL Zip: 60139

Phone: 630-469-5533

Contact:

Resident Alim: Syed Mahbub Mahdi

Nos of People Involved: 350

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistan, India

Years of Existence: 22

Language of Programs: Urdu, English

Youth Programs: camps

Womens Programs: own lecture in Muharram, women's committees

Current challenges: attendance in weekly events is low, most people come in Ramadan and Muharram,

Future Visions: Getting youth to attend, getting them to participate in programs and management; propagate our concepts, da'wa, increase penetration in the community

Da'wa Tabligh Work: None

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Education Center of Florida**

Address: Box 677671

City: Orlando State: FL Zip: 32827

Phone: 407- 247-4137

Contact: Mohammed Najda

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 80

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 8 years

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Some

Womens Programs: N

Current challenges: Building or owning own center, resident alim

Future Visions: To be in our own center, to be involved with the youth and the propagation of Islam

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Coverts visit center

Building (Rented/Own): rented

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Education Centre (Georgia)**

Address: 1100 Hope Road

City: Dunwoody State: GA Zip: 30350

Phone:

Contact: Syed Haider Shirazi

Resident Alim: Yes

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistan, India, Iran

Years of Existence: 20

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: N

Womens Programs: Their programs

Current challenges: Low tolerance, need more workers, petty differences between members, people forget priorities

Future Visions: Need to teach children about Shi'ism so there will not be an identity problem; continued adult education, knowledge of Qur'an and ahl al-bayt so can meet challenges from non-Muslims

Da'wa Tabligh Work: None

Building (Rented/Own): Own property

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Education Center of Maryland**

Address: 7917 Montrose Road

City: Potomac State: MD Zip: 20854

Phone: 301-340-2070

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 1500

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians, Arabs

Years of Existence: 25

Language of Programs: English, Persian

Youth Programs: yes, camps, lectures

Womens Programs: yes

Current challenges: -

Future Visions: Meeting objectives. English translation, unity

Da'wa Tabligh Work:

Building (Rented/Own): Islamic center

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Educational Center of Orange County**

Address: 3194 – Airport Loop Dr.

City: Costa Mesa State: CA Zip: 92626

Phone: 714-432-0060

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 1000

Ethnicity of attendees: Persians, Arabs, & converts

Years of Existence: 10

Language of Programs: English, Farsi & Arabic

Youth Programs: Special debates & discussions

Womens Programs: special events

Current challenges: financial stability, develop literature for non-Muslims

Future Visions: finances, literature for non-Muslims

Da'wa Tabligh Work: dialogue, TV programs, schools and colleges, inmates correspondence

Building (Rented/Own): masjid

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Educational Center in San Diego**

Address: 8898 Clairemont Mesa Blvd, Suite H

City: San Diego State: CA Zip: 92123

Phone: 858-292-6260

Contact:

Resident Alim: Sayyid Mohammed al-Qazwini

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: Persians and Arabs

Years of Existence: 12

Language of Programs: Arabic, Persian & English

Youth Programs: No special programs

Womens Programs: No special programs

Current challenges: financial, more English lectures, divisiveness and increasing membership

Future Visions: financial stability, transmitting religion to next generation, literature for non-Muslims, using English, buy new building

Da'wa Tabligh Work: contacts with schools, visit non-Muslim centers

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Education Society**

Address: 19032 E. Chenango Circle

City: Aurora State: CO Zip:

Phone: 303-782-6944

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 75

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis, Khojas

Years of Existence: 15

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: n

Womens Programs: n

Current challenges: Proper center, unity, educating kids

Future Visions: Create a proper Shi'a community

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Rented

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic House of Wisdom**

Address:

City: Dearborn State:MI Zip: 48126

Phone: 313-582-1221

Contact:

Resident Alim: Imam Ilahi

Nos of People Involved: 750

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians, Lebanese

Years of Existence: 17

Language of Programs: English, Arabic, Persian

Youth Programs: Y

Women's Programs: Y

Current challenges: Finance, unity, organization

Future Visions: develop leadership, create Islamic identity, reach out to Muslims and non-Muslims, more youth events, full time school, library

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Many – TVs, dialogue, speaking to college students

Building (Rented/Own): Center

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Yes

Name of Organization: **Islamic Humanitarian Service**

Address: 81 Hollinger Crescent

City: Kitchener State: ON Zip: N2K 2Y8

Phone: 519-895-1381

Contact: Shafiq Hudda

Resident Alim: Yes

Nos of People Involved: 100

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 20

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Youth division coordinate activities, special events

Women's Programs: United Muslim Women of Canada

Current challenges:

Future Visions: Anti-Islamic propaganda need proper education and understanding

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Prisoners, New Muslims, visit schools/colleges

Building (Rented/Own): Office

Ramadhan	
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	
Madrasa	
Wafayat/Wiladat	

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Islamic Institute of Knowledge**

Address: 13200 W. Warren Ave

City: Dearborn State: MI Zip: 48126

Phone: 313-584-2570

Contact:

Resident Alim: Imam Adul Latif al-Berrie

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: Arabs

Years of Existence: 13

Language of Programs: Arabic, English

Youth Programs: Y

Women's Programs:

Current challenges:

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Facility

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Ma'sumeen Center**

Address: 115 Wood Street

City: Hopkinton State: MA Zip: 01748

Phone: 508-497-3462

Contact: Ali Asghar

Resident Alim:

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 10

Language of Programs: Urdu, English

Youth Programs: N

Womens Programs: Own events

Current challenges: More participation

Future Visions: more activities, youths

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Own center

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Shia Ithna-asheri Association of Ottawa**

Address: 37 Brady Avenue

City:Kanata State: ON Zip: K2K 2R2

Phone: 613-567-0731

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 12

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: speeches

Women's Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: more participation

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Islamic Shi'a Ithnaasheri Jamaat of Kitchener**

Address: 65 Fifth Ave.

City: Kitchener, State: ON Zip: N2C 1P5

Phone 519-748-5853

Contact: Sultan Hudda

Resident Alim: No

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis, Khojas, Iranians

Years of Existence: 20

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Youths on executive committee

Women's Programs: Women's committees

Current challenges: Lack of attendance

Future Visions: More youth programs, expand building

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Open to non-Muslims

Building (Rented/Own) Own mosque

Ramadhan Y

Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: No

Name of Organization: **Islamic Society of California**

Address: 781 Bolinas Road

City: Fairfax State: CA Zip: 94930

Tel: 415-454-6666

Contact:

Resident Alim: Imam Khorasani

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 30

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: summer activities

Women's Programs: at their homes

Current challenges: Make Islam better understood, be friends with all

Future Visions: Reduce fundamentalism in all religions, attract youth

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Satellite TV broadcast

Building (Rented/Own): O

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Ja'ffari Islamic Center**

Address: 7340 Bayview Avenue

City: Thornhill State: Ontario Zip: L3T 2R7

Phone: 905-881-1763

Contact: S. Najarali

Resident Alim: Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

Nos of People Involved: 3000

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 28

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: Summer events, lectures, debates, committees

Women's Programs: lectures, sports, committees

Current challenges: Getting youth more involved, fundraising for community center

Future Visions: Multi-purpose center,

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Various outreach works, schools visit center

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Jaferia Association of North America**

Address: 124 3rd Street

City: Brentwood State: NY Zip: 11717

Phone: 631-491 8555

Contact: Syed Naqvi Istafa

Resident Alim:

Nos of People Involved: 800

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis, Indians

Years of Existence: 12

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: special classes

Women's Programs:

Current challenges: ad to current facility, finances, divisiveness in community, political involvement, maintain Shi'a values

Future Visions: English in programs, literature for non-Muslims, establish local newsletter, develop relations with Sunnis and non-Muslims, use facilities more frequently

Da'wa Tabligh Work: dialogue, schools and colleges

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Ja'ffaria Center**

Address: 25 Sunburst Circle

City: E. Amherst State: NY Zip: 14051

Phone:

Contact: Dr. Sheriff

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 75

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis and others

Years of Existence: 4

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges: Lack of growth of population, many people moving away, too many rituals, more emphasis on Qur'an

Future Visions: Need a roving alim to motivate locals, education for youth, expose youth to Islamic literature

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Jaffery Union of N.E. Ohio**

Address: 1470 Mancester Rd

City: Akron State: OH Zip: 44483

Phone: 330-847-7280

Contact: N. Khimjee

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 10 years

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: madrasa, have attractive programs, many people moving out of town, unity

Future Visions: unite different groups, social welfare, youth events, interfaith

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Kerbalaa Islamic Education Center**

Address: 15332 W. Warren Ave.

City: Dearborn State: MI Zip: 48126

Phone: (313) 584-2077

Contact: Shaykh Husham Husseini

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 400

Ethnicity of attendees: Iraqis

Years of Existence: 12

Language of Programs: Arabic

Youth Programs: some

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges: finance, getting the community to understand situation in Iraq, youth involvement, misunderstanding of Islam

Future Visions: getting the youth more involved, expand dialogue with others, getting media to understand Islam,

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Yes

Building (Rented/Own): O

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Al-Mahdi Benevolent Foundation of Arizona**

Address: 1016 S. River Dr.

City: Tempe State: AZ Zip: 85281

Phone: 486-557-9699

Contact:

Resident Alim:

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 8 years

Language of Programs: English, Arabic and Persian

Youth Programs: special programs

Women's Programs:

Current challenges: add to current facility, finances, regular attendance, transmit religion to youth

Future Visions: get a resident alim, transmit religion to next generation, add to facility, full time school, social services, Islamic seminary for teaching new alims

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Intra-faith dialogue

Building (Rented/Own): masjid

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Al-Mahdi Islamic Center**

Address: 510 Concession Road

City: Pickering State: ON Zip: L1X 2R4

Phone: 905-837-1572

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 500

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 18

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: events

Women's Programs: own programs

Current challenges: expanding facilities

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Al-Makarim Islamic Foundation**

Address: 1054 E.11 , or Box 11094

City: Erie State: PA Zip: 16503

Phone: 814 455 5500

Contact:

Resident Alim: Shaykh Mazin al-Sahlani

Nos of People Involved: 110

Ethnicity of attendees: Arabs

Years of Existence: 7

Language of Programs: English, Arabic

Youth Programs: events, programs

Women's Programs: programs

Current challenges: regular attendance, financial literature for non-Muslims, political involvement

Future Visions: need facility, dealing with divisiveness, cooperating with Sunnis

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Manassas Mosque**

Address: 12950 Prayer Ct.

City: Manassas VA 20109 State: VA Zip: 20109

Phone: 703-257-5537

Contact:

Resident Alim: Abelfazl Nahidian

Nos of People Involved: 200

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians, Arabs

Years of Existence: 10

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Camps, special events

Women's Programs:

Current challenges: More participation,

Future Visions: Unity, outreach work, own center

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Yes

Building (Rented/Own): Rented

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Masom**

Address: 4353 W. Lawrence Ave.

City: Chicago State IL Zip 60630

Phone:

Contact: Abrar Mehdi

Resident Alim: Yes

Nos of People Involved: 1,000

Ethnicity of attendees: India, Pakistan

Years of Existence: 21

Language of Programs: Urdu, English

Youth Programs: Few

Women's Programs: Own programs and events

Current challenges: Involve youth, find a bilingual maulana

Future Visions: Need string community, youth programs, Funeral home,

Da'wa Tabligh Work:

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan:	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Momen Metroplex Organization of Muslims in Texas**

Address: 1019 Perry Street

City: Irving State: TX Zip: 75014

Phone: 972-554-0200

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 250

Ethnicity of attendees: Pakistanis, Indians

Years of Existence: 15

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: special events, Ramadhan Contest

Women's Programs:

Current challenges: More participation

Future Visions:

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Muslim Community School**

Address 7917 Montrose Road

City Potomac State MD Zip 20854

Phone: 301-340-6713

Contact:

Resident Alim: Yes

Nos of People Involved: 350

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranian, Arabs

Years of Existence: 20

Language of Programs: English. Persian

Youth Programs: camps, special events

Women's Programs: Many

Current challenges: Uniting different factions,

Future Visions: cater for youth, more involvement

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Yes

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Sahebozzaman Islamic Center of Atlanta**

Address: 4853 Old Mountain Park Rd.

Phone Number: (770) 642-9411P.O. Box 671001

City: Roswell State: GA Zip: 30075

Phone: 770-642-9411

Contact:

Resident Alim: No

Nos of People Involved: 80

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians

Years of Existence: 10

Language of Programs: English, Persian

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges:

Future Visions: More attendance

Da'wa Tabligh Work: No

Building (Rented/Own): Rent

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Shi'a Islamic Education Center**

Address: 5904 Waterman

City: St/ Louis State: MO Zip: 63112

Phone: 314-727-0352

Contact: Haji Husain

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 250

Ethnicity of attendees: Iranians, Iraq, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 16

Language of Programs: English, Persian

Youth Programs: Some

Women's Programs: on executive board, plan for community, very active

Current challenges: different groups to work together, proper literature of Islamic texts, communicate with other Shi'a groups, parental involvement, good Muharram lecturers
Moving to a new center

Future Visions: Hope to educate at the new center, more people involved on a regular basis, religious activities, research center, publish Islamic literature

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Shia Islamic Union of London**

Address: 48 Downing Crescent

City: London State: Ontario Zip: N6C 3C8

Phone: 519-681-7829

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 75

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas, Pakistanis, Arabs, Iranians

Years of Existence: 15

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges: More participation

Future Visions: More programs

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Rented

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	N
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Shia Ithna-Asheri Islamic Jamaat of Los Angeles**

Address: 7925 Serapis Avenue

City: Pico Rivera, State: CA Zip: 90660

Phone: 909/823-8490

Contact: G. Khaku

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 250

Ethnicity of attendees: Khojas, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 22

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: Yes

Women's Programs: own events

Current challenges: Interact with Sunnis, Resident alim

Future Visions: Sports complex, madrasa classrooms, Burial scheme, senior housing

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Books to prisons

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Unity Center**

Address: 10909 Chippewa Road

City: Brecksville State: OH Zip: 44141

Phone:

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 1

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges: Common agenda and programs, not to alienate a group, strike a middle ground between different interests, youth programs

Future Visions: interfaith, make center more vibrant, relationship with Sunnis, combined programs, attract more youth

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): O

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: Y

Name of Organization: **Al-Zahra Center**

Address: 38557 W. 287th Street

City: Paola State: KS Zip: 66071

Phone: 913-557-5614

Contact: Jamil Agha

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 50

Ethnicity of attendees: Mixed

Years of Existence: 2002

Language of Programs: English

Youth Programs: No

Womens Programs: Own Programs

Current challenges: Finance, meeting on a regular basis, encourage youth to participate

Future Visions: Build own center, finance

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): R

Ramadhan	w/ends
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Al-Zahra International Foundation**

Address: 5121 Earnscliffe Avenue

City: Montreal State: Quebec Zip: H3X 2P7

Phone: 514-486-1259

Contact:

Resident Alim: Y

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis, Iranians

Years of Existence: 12

Language of Programs: English, Urdu

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: Own programs

Current challenges: greater attendance

Future Visions: Unity

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Al-Zahra Islamic Center**

Address: 12457 Old Hickory Blvd

City: Antioch State: TN Zip: 37013

Phone: 615-584-7793

Contact:

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Persians, Arabs

Years of Existence: 10

Language of Programs: English, Arabic and Persian

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges: Adding to current facility, regular attendance, educate youth, maintain Shi'a values

Future Visions: better facility, regular attendance, more participation, educate youth, speaker

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): Mosque

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Al-Zahra Islamic Center**

Address: 7925 Tolls Lane

City: Louisville State: Kentucky Zip: 40214

Phone: (270) 766-1022

Contact: Dr. Kashif Hyder

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 500

Ethnicity of attendees: Iraqis, Pakistanis

Years of Existence: 5

Language of Programs: English, Arabic

Youth Programs: N

Women's Programs: N

Current challenges: Language barriers, ethnicity, youths ignored, community is scattered
Getting good speakers

Future Visions: develop new community center

Da'wa Tabligh Work: N

Building (Rented/Own): O

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	N
Madrasa	N
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Name of Organization: **Zainabiyya Islamic Center**

Address: 1106 Hope Road,

City: Dunwoody State: GA Zip: 30350

Phone: 770-449-4105

Contact: Akbar Zaidi

Resident Alim: N

Nos of People Involved: 150

Ethnicity of attendees: Indians, Pakistanis, Iranians, Converts

Years of Existence: 32

Language of Programs: Urdu, English

Youth Programs: some weekend programs

Women's Programs: weekend programs

Current challenges: steer community to accept English programs, arrange more youth programs so as to attract them by having Islamic films etc.

Future Visions: Get more English programs, convert more people to Shi'a Islam, accommodate more converts by having suitable programs

Da'wa Tabligh Work: Yes

Building (Rented/Own): Own

Ramadhan	Y
Thursday Night	Y
Muharram	Y
Friday Prayer	Y
Madrasa	Y
Wafayat/Wiladat	Y

Publication/Newsletter: N

Chapter Four

Leadership in the Shi'i Community

The growing presence of the North American Shi'i community has led to increased interaction between Muslims living here and those abroad. Globalization and improved modes of communications have further allowed foreign ideas to flow freely, enabling foreign accretions and figures to permeate the lives of North American Shi 'is.

This chapter will initially examine exterior influences on Shi'i Muslims living in North America. Furthermore, the chapter assesses the impact of the imported Shi'i heritage on the definition of Shi'ism in the American context. It also examines how the Shi'is have drawn on their spiritual leaders based in the Middle East to form a cohesive milieu in America. It will also look at the roles and views of some North American '*ulama*' and will examine the challenges they encounter as the religious guides of the North American Shi'i community. The chapter will also assess and how the events of September 11, 2001 have impacted the Shi'i community here.

The Role the *Marja' al-Taqlid* in America

The Shi'i experience in North America is characterized by the influence of the Shi'i religious leadership, also called the institution of *marja'iyya*. A *marja'* is the most learned juridical authority in the Shi'i community whose rulings on the *shari'a* (Islamic moral-legal law) are followed by his adherents. The

traditional religious structure of the community plays an important role in the functioning of Shi'i life in this country. In the absence of the twelfth Imam al-Mahdi (A.S), the religious scholar-jurists, known as *mujtahids*, are acknowledged as his deputies and spokesmen in directing the spiritual and social activities of their followers. The *marja'* is seen by the Shi'is as invested with the authority to make binding decisions for the Shi'i community. He is also responsible for re-interpreting the relevance of Islamic norms to the modern era, thereby enabling him to influence the religious and social lives of his followers.

The process of following the juridical rulings of the most learned jurist (*a'lam*) is called *taqlid* (literally imitation). It is the *taqlid* factor that has acted as the main catalyst for unity in the Shi'i community in America by fostering ties between different Shi'i centers and establishments that have often been divided by cultural, ethnic and linguistic considerations. Due to this factor, Shi'is are allied to the *maraji'* (pl. of *marja'*) rather than to any foreign government. The institution of *marja'iyya* has provided a sense of unity as well as of direction in matters pertaining to the living of a religio-moral life for the Shi'a. This institution has remained independent of any government control because it depends solely on revenues derived from the religious tax of *al-khumus* (the fifth) paid by Shi'is for the maintenance of religious institutions administered by the *marja' al-taqlid*. The latter authorizes the manner in which *khumus* contributions are to be allocated to various religious projects in the Shi'a community.

The *maraji'* are represented by their agents (*wukala'*) whom they send to guide their followers and to administer the running of the centers. The appointment by the *maraji'* of financial and religious deputies to act as their representatives has enabled the community members to engage in major projects to provide facilities for religious education for the Shi'i community in America. Major cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, and Detroit have sizable Shi'i populations. It is in these cities that the centers have daily religious-secular schools in addition to places of worship. At present, there are less than ten such schools within the Shi'i community in America. Shi'i religious schools differ from their Sunni counterparts in that the religious content of the courses offered is structured on the hermeneutic model provided by the Shi'i imams.

A corollary to the institution of *taqlid* is the practice of giving *khumus* of the net savings to a *marja'* or his representative. The revenue generated from *khumus* has enabled the Shi'i *maraji'* to finance the running of Islamic centers and the salaries of religious preachers in America. Traditionally, *khumus* has made the Shi'i centers independent of government control, empowering their religious leaders to address any issue they deem appropriate. In the American context, the *khumus* factor has enabled the religious leaders, although residing abroad, to direct the religious and socio-economic lives of the Shi'is in America. They have established mosques, Islamic schools, and other social and religious institutions that have benefited the community.

The institutionalization of different centers under the leadership of the *wukala'* has also resulted in competition for *khumus* money flowing into the centers. As noted in chapter two, the earliest Shi'i center in New York was founded by a prominent *marja'* Ayatullah al-Khu'i. Besides providing basic religious services, it also has a daily Islamic school where both religious and secular subjects are taught. After the death of Ayatullah al-Khu'i in 1992, al-Khu'i Foundation chose to ally itself with Iraqi-based Ayatullah Seestani, who was regarded by many as the most learned (*a'lam*) after al-Khu'i.

Located quite close to al-Khu'i Foundation is the Imam 'Ali Center which runs a daily Islamic school and offers services similar to those provided by al-Khu'i Foundation. The Imam 'Ali Center caters mainly to the Iranian community. In addition, al-Husseini madrasa, run by the Khoja community, is also located in the vicinity. Similarly, in Dearborn, Michigan, seven Shi'i centers compete in rendering similar services to the local community. Shi'i institutions in America have become a source of dissension between followers of different *maraji'*, duplicating services and competing for public attention and *khumus* dues. This point was emphasized in our survey. When questioned on the contemporary challenges confronting the Shi'i community in America, a center responded: "To get different nationalities to work together and to communicate with other Shi'i groups."

In North America, *khumus* revenues provide for the construction of Islamic centers as well as for the salaries of religious preachers and teachers who cannot be supported by other

community-generated revenues such as annual dues. The *khumus* in the Shi'i community therefore has been important for the independence of Shi'i centers from outside interference. Moreover, the preachers supported by this fund have found themselves in a better position to exert their autonomy in relation to the communities they serve in their capacity as religious guides and teachers.

The independent nature of the *marji' al-taqlid* and the self-generated and self-managed financial structure of the Shi'i religious organization has made it possible for the community to organize its affairs independent of the control of Muslim governments in the Middle East or anywhere else. Thus, the political or religious interference of some Islamic centers funded by such countries as Saudi Arabia or Libya do not exist for the Shi'i community. Much of this independence is a direct result of the pioneer immigrants and their attachment to their religious heritage. Their desire to transmit this legacy to succeeding generations has been the driving force in their efforts to maintain institutions necessary for the preservation of their identity in an alien environment. The appointment by the *marja' al-taqlid* of financial and religious deputies among the trusted community members has inspired the necessary confidence among individual members to contribute toward their spiritual well-being and has generated the incentive to engage in major projects such as the construction of Islamic centers and facilities for religious education considered necessary for the continued prosperity of the Shi'a community in North America.

Most of the religious centers affiliate themselves with different *maraji'*. Khoja, Pakistani and Iraqi centers generally follow the rulings of Ayatullah Seestani whereas Iranian centers do the *taqlid* of Ayatullah Khamenei. Lebanese Shi'is tend to follow either Ayatullah Fadlallah or Seestani. Lebanese Shi'is in Dearborn are frequently divided about the positions adopted by Ayatullahs Fadlallah and Mahdi Shams al-Din.[83]

The *maraji'*s impact in America has been further enhanced in places where refugees from Iraq have settled after the Gulf War. It has to be remembered that since many Iraqis originate from the holy Shi'i cities (*'atabat*) of Kerbala and Najaf where the *maraji'* reside, Iraqi refugees tend to be more religiously inclined, thus imposing their religious commitments on Shi'i institutions here. Whereas some second generation North American Shi'is may be lax in adhering to the *fatawa* of the *marja'*, most Iraqis follow their edicts minutely, imposing these on American centers.[84]

Increasingly, Shi'i *maraji'* living in the Middle East have recognized the need to foster closer ties with their followers in the West. Besides establishing centers, they have sought to meet the challenges of modernity by being more accessible to their followers in America, sending emissaries to visit them. Thus, the prominent spiritual leader in Iraq, Ayatullah Seestani, regularly sends his agent al-Sayyid Murtaza Kashmiri to the West to monitor the progress and report on the needs of the community. In addition, al-

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[83] See the discussion on this in Linda Walbridge, *Without Forgetting*, 79-81.

[84] Ibid., See the examples on cited 72-3.

Khu'i center has regular contacts with him and updates him on events in and the needs of the North American community.

In recent times, a distinct genre of juridical texts called the *mustahdathat* literature has emerged from the Shi'i theological centers of Qum (Iran) and Najaf (Iraq). What is novel about these texts is that they evince increasing attempts by the *maraji'* to respond to issues affecting the lives of Shi'is in the West. The literature is a collection of a *marja's* responses to questions posed by his followers in the West. For instance, a question was posed to Ayatullah Seestani concerning the direction of prayer from North America, an issue that had divided the Muslim community in America. In the early 1990's some Muslims prayed facing towards the south east whereas the majority prayed towards the north east. Interestingly, Seestani's ruling differs radically from his predecessor, Ayatullah al-Khu'i.[85]

The need to address the younger generation residing in the West is further illustrated by the title of a recently published book, *A Code of Practice for Muslims in the West in Accordance with the Edicts of Ayatullah al-Udhma as-Sayyid 'Ali al-Husaini as-Seestani.* Here, such issues as masturbation, homosexuality, and viewing pornographic pictures and films are discussed quite explicitly.[86] Similarly, Ayatullah Khamenei has a book that addresses some of the questions posed to him. Here, he responds to

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[85] *Current Legal Issues According to the Edicts of Ayatullah al-Sayyid 'Ali al-Seestani*, (London: Imam 'Ali Foundation, 1997), 25-6.

[86] 'Abdul Hadi al-Hakim, *A Code of Practice*, 236.

some of the questions that were posed by Iranian students and immigrants living in the west.

Questions posed to Ayatollahs Khamenei, Seestani, and other '*ulama*' clearly reflect the challenges that confront American Shi'is. Thus, Seestani was asked about such things as the genre of music that Shi'is are permitted to listen to (*halal* music), consuming food products that contain gelatine,[87] offering prayers in a space craft, the permissibility of having test tube babies, and praying and fasting in places that have extremely long days or nights.[88] He was further asked whether it was permissible to rely on DNA test results that indicate a child was born out of wedlock. Even though there is no authoritative precedence in the normative texts, Seestani says: "Whosoever shall attain certainty through other means, be it through blood test or any other means, should feel free to act upon it." Seestani cautions that such a test is not a legitimate means to determining adultery and that the Islamic penal code will not be applicable based solely on DNA results.[89]

A religious figure who has become increasingly popular among many Shi'i youth is the Lebanese *marja'* Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah. His popularity in the West is based on his greater accessibility to the laity. In fact, it is possible for Muslims in the West to converse with him directly over the phone.

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[87] Ibid., 37.

[88] 'Abdul Hadi al-Hakim, *A Code of Practice for Muslims in the West in Accordance with the Edicts of Ayatullah al-Udhma as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Seestani*, translated by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi (London: Imam 'Ali Foundation, 1999), 70, 84.

[89] *Current Legal Issues*, 48.

Fadlallah is also popular due to his acquaintance with Western culture. He maintains that Muslims must understand the internal dynamics of Western civilization.[90] The Islamic movement, he argues, is not to be confined to the Middle East; rather, it is to disseminate its teachings through peaceful means in the West.[91]

Fadlallah is popular with the youths because his religious edicts (*fatawa*) are more pragmatic and lenient. Contrary to Seestani, he allows the shaving of the beard. He argues that the ruling given by classical scholars regarding the requirement of keeping a beard has to be properly contextualized. Their edict was predicated on the need to differentiate between Muslims and Jews. This, Fadlallah says, is restricted to cases in which Muslims are in a minority and others in a majority. He further states: "It is understood from the *hadith* that the prohibition of shaving the beard was contingent on a time-related issue at the beginning of the Islamic message."[92] Like Ayatullah Khumayni, Fadlallah also differs from Seestani in that he allows playing chess.[93]

Fadlallah's appeal to Muslims in the West also lies in the fact that some of his views are in stark contrast to those held by the majority of the Shi'i *'ulama'*. Some '*ulama*' consider polytheists,

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[90] Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, (Albany: SUNY, 1996), 239-240.

[91] Ibid., 238.

[92] Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, *World of Our Youth*, translated by Khaleel Mohammed, (Montreal: Organization for the Advancement of Islamic Learning and Humanitarian Services, 1998), 226.

[93] Ibid., 225. Most jurists prohibit playing chess as it was used as a gambling tool.

atheists, and idolaters to be ritually impure (*najas*). Thus, their food cannot be consumed. Fadlallah disagrees, saying that in essence, no one is impure. The impurity, he argues, lies in matters of beliefs, not in essence.[94] Hence, he rules that even Hindus and Buddhists are ritually pure and that their food may be consumed.

Fadlallah also has a web site in Arabic and English where his Friday sermons, questions, and answers are posted. Issues that impact Muslims in America are evident in some of the questions posed to him. Thus, when questioned about the permissibility of cloning, Fadlallah replied:

"As for whether we should permit cloning or consider it unlawful, we believe that it is permissible to clone animals if it is to the benefit of mankind, such as cloning animals to produce organs that we want to implant in a patient who needs a heart, an eye or a kidney, so that we can do away with taking organs from living or dead human beings. As for cloning human beings, it is an issue that demands extensive studies.

Therefore, this is a dynamic issue that has to be studied in the light of future data, and we might be one of the few who did not issue a judgment considering cloning unlawful."[95]

The influence of the *maraji'* in America extends in different ways. For example, in 1989 Ayatollah al-Khu'i offered several million dollars to the Islamic Center of America, the Jami', to build an Islamic school in Detroit. The school was to be under the

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[94] Ibid., 218.

[95] See Fadl Allah's web page www.bayynat.org.lb

jurisdiction of the New York based al-Khu'i Foundation. The offer was declined by the Jami' because the board members wanted complete control over the school. Another center in Detroit, the Majma', accepted the offer and now represents al-Khu'i Foundation.[96]

In addition to differences generated by *taqlid*, political allegiances adopted abroad also impact the stances adopted by some Shi'i centers in America. The Islamic center of America (Jami') in Dearborn is sympathetic to the cause of the Lebanese based Harakat 'Amal whereas the Majma' is more closely linked to the politically active Hizb Allah movement.[97] Hizb al-Da'wa, a politico-religious movement opposed to the Iraqi regime, has recently purchased a mosque in Dearborn. This center (called Islamic Cultural Center) has been partially financed by Ayatollah Fadlallah. His call for active resistance to injustices is propagated in such centers. The Majlis, which is also based in Dearborn, maintains a very strict dress code and adopts a more rigorous interpretation of Islam.[98] Centers run by the Khoja community in America traditionally maintain a politically quiescent posture. Hence they do not reflect the political ideals of any Islamic country.

The preceding discussion suggests that apart from the *taqlid* factor, differences between centers arise due to differing political alliances engendered in the Middle East. It is correct to state that although *taqlid* has united different ethnic groups under the

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96 Walbridge, *Without*, 64.

97 Ibid., 53.

98 Linda Walbridge, *Without Forgetting*, 54-5.

leadership of a *marja'*, the fact that institutions are affiliated to different *maraji'* has often precipitated differences between Islamic centers. This is most evident at the time of celebrating the *eid* holiday when, depending on their affiliations, different centers often commemorate the beginning or end of Ramadhan on different days.

A comparison of the Shi'i experience with that of the Sunnis in America indicates that the latter are influenced by mass movements from the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East that try to permeate mainstream Muslim life, using mosques as bases for their activities. The main objective of movements such as the Tablighis is to preach to Muslims, urging them to return to the *sunna* of the Prophet and early companions.[99] The Salafiyya, on the other hand, have emphasized the return to pristine Islam and to an understanding of faith exemplified by the early generation of Muslims. Their followers are composed primarily of Gulf Arabs with some American converts. The Salafiyya 'societies' are both ideologically and financially supported by the Saudi Arabian Embassy and Dar al-Iftah in Saudi Arabia. The Shi'i experience is quite different in that it is the religious guides residing abroad who exert much influence by sending their representatives to establish centers and to guide their followers. However, our research based on speaking to a number of scholars and community leaders leads us to believe that there is a distinct lacuna in the leadership to direct

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[99] On the mass movements in Sunni mosques in America see Barbara Metcalf, "New Medinas: The Tablighi Jama'at in America and Europe", in Metcalfe, ed., *Making Muslim Space*, 113.

the social, economic and political activities of the Shi'i community in North America.

Iranian Influence in North America

A study of Shi'ism necessitates the examination of the role of Iran in America. The impact of the Iranian revolution has been felt in America in different ways: through the influx of Shi'i immigrants, through the internet, and through the importation of foreign literature. Immigrants bring their lasting impressions of the revolution and transmit these to American Shi'is. For example, a number of Muslims were invited to the Islamic Republic of Iran after the revolution in 1979 and many returned with renewed zest for a more active expression of Islam in America. This activism has expressed itself in a number of ways, ranging from a ban on mixed swimming in schools to the establishment of worship areas in some airports.[100] Many Muslims began observing regular prayers and fasts and stopped consuming alcohol after the revolution. The Iranian revolution also created heightened concern about how children were being raised in North America. [101]

Political events in Iran and Iraq have clear implications for the religious outlook of activist Shi'ism today. Viewed as an Islamic response to Western-American cultural imperialism, such

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[100] See Jane Smith, *Islam in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 164.

[101] Yvonne Haddad, "The Impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on the Syrian Muslims of Montreal" in Earle Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban and Regula Qureshi eds., in *The Muslim Community*, 174 -7.

events have served to awaken religious sentiment and pride in the Shi'a community in general, and have also been influential in some Sunni areas where the Iranian revolution is interpreted in non-sectarian terms. It has been of immeasurable and unprecedented influence in the Shi'i community in North America insofar as it has been interpreted as a kind of neutralization of the "cultural colonization" of Western forces.

Despite propaganda generated through the concerted efforts of several Arab Middle East governments to discredit both the Imam Khumayni and Shi'ism in North America, the revolution in Islamic Iran has given Muslims a renewed confidence in preserving their identity in a secular-atheistic culture. This confidence is reflected in the enormous rise in religious awareness and the emergence of a "reborn" attitude among younger generations of Shi'a and Sunnis alike. A number of young men and women in Shi'a organizations have adopted Islamic codes of behaviour. Shi'i inmates in various incarceration facilities report mocking, ridiculing and even discrimination not only from the prison guards and other inmates but also from Sunni inmates due to their Shi'i beliefs.

Iranian influence is also evident in the literature that is available in many Shi'i centers. Literature regarding Iran is publicized mainly through Islamic centers that offer a variety of educational programs, bookshops, and sites for community gatherings. The thoughts and sermons of Imam Khumayni are widely circulated in such gatherings and conferences.

The impact of the Iranian revolution was not confined to Shi'i Muslims in North America. According to Yvonne Haddad, eighty five per-cent of those interviewed in her survey expressed joy at the passing of the Shah's regime.[102] The revolution injected a sense of pride and provided a positive affirmation of identity as it was viewed by many Muslims as a vindication of God's promise to grant victory to the believers.[103] The establishment of an Islamic government was interpreted as an empowering of the Islamic community by God and an indication that salvation in America could come only through a similar process, one in which Muslims take charge of their lives by eschewing Western values and returning to the Islam taught by the Prophet.[104]

While the ambit of its activities is not as extensive as the Saudi-backed Muslim World League, Iran has managed to exert its influences in several forms. In the academic realm, an exchange program has been developed whereby several scholars trained at the theological seminary in Qum undertake a doctoral program at McGill University in Montreal. Many of these students hope to teach in the West upon attaining their doctorate.

Unofficial Iranian groups have also been active in America. The Ansariyan Publication of Qum has recently published a large number of Shi'i books that it sends to converts in American

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[102] Yvonne Haddad, "The Impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on the Syrian Muslims of Montreal" in Earle Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban and Regula Qureshi eds., *The Muslim Community*, 166.

[103] Ibid., 166 -8.

[104] Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 166.

prisons. Magazines and journals published in Iran such as *Mahjuba, Islamic Echo,* and *Tawhid* are widely circulated in America. Furthermore, the works of Iranian intellectuals like Murtaza Mutahhari, 'Ali Shari'ati, and 'Abd al-Karim Soroush have had significant impact in moulding the thinking of many North American Shi'i Muslims.

The Iranian revolution has even affected some African-American movements. Disillusioned by the Sunni community, 'Isa Muhammad, founder of the Ansaar Allah movement, turned to Shi'ism after the Iranian revolution. Around 1982, he began to appropriate Shi'i terminology and affirm the role of Imam 'Ali (who he claims was black), thus rejecting Sunni Islam. He further traced his lineage to the Prophet, through Fatima and 'Ali. His self-identification as the Mahdi also fits into Shi'i millenarian expectations.[105]

Leadership within the American context: The Shi'i *'Ulama'*

Having discussed how '*ulama*' and *maraji'* living abroad impact the Shi'i community in North America, We will now examine the indigenous religious leadership. As previously mentioned, Shi'ism in America is characterized by diverse ethnic and cultural entities. In an effort to unite the diverse ethnic groups that make up the American Shi'i community, an indigenous council of Shi'i '*ulama'* was formed in 1993. Composed of the '*ulama*' in

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[105] Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, *Mission to America*, 134-35.

North America, the Council of Shi'a Muslim Scholars in North America used to meet annually to discuss issues germane to the community. Among the stated aims of the council is support of the Shi'i community of North America by strengthening unity and co-operation among the Shi'a '*ulama*'.[106] In addition, the council seeks to deal with issues that require the collective efforts of *'ulama'* and to defend Islam in general and the *madhhab* (school of law) of the *ahl al-bayt* (the progeny of the Prophet) in particular. It further seeks to unite all Muslims by bringing various Muslim schools of thought closer to each other.

At the head of the central committee of the council is an executive committee that manages the activities and affairs of the council of Shi'a *'ulama'* of North America. Although it has been in existence for almost ten years, the council has yet to produce a body that resembles the Sunni based Fiqh Council of North America. This is a body of fiqh councilors that seeks to "confront the many legal issues facing Muslims in North America".[107] The Fiqh Council further seeks to extract juridical rulings from the revealed texts and rational sources by employing principles and methodologies of *usul al-fiqh* (principles for deriving juridical rulings). It may even depart from rulings stated by classical jurists.

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[106] I am grateful to Shaykh Fadhil Sahlani, chairman of the Council of Shi'a Muslim Scholars of North America for sharing the Council's constitution with me.

[107] Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo, "The Fiqh Councilor in North America," in Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito eds., *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 83.

The council of Shi'i *'ulama'*, on the other hand, has not provided a comparable viable hermeneutic of the *shari'a.* The council has also failed to formulate any definitive direction for the Shi'i community nor has the council been able to bridge the chasm that has divided different ethnic groups within the community. A comment heard from many council members is that they are too preoccupied with activities of their own centers to be concerned with the council of *'ulama'*. The fact that leadership of the council is centered on a single individual and that it does not rotate among different council members has made the council inert and has created general apathy among members of the council. The council of Shi'a '*ulama*' also needs to be more receptive to public needs and able to give direction to the community. At the moment, most Shi'as are not even aware of the existence of the council of Shi'a '*ulama*' or of their objectives and mandates. Clearly, there is a distinct communication problem that needs to be addressed.

As a prominent member of the Shi'i '*ulama*' candidly admitted to us in a personal interview, "Shi'is in America are neither organized nor united. The institution created by the '*ulama'* has so far failed to unite the community or provide it with any direction."

The survey which we referred to in chapter two also indicates that there is a paucity of '*ulama*' who understand the socio-religious challenges confronting Shi'a Muslims in North America. Few *'ulama'* in the west are conversant with issues relating to the local community and are fully instructed in Islamic tradition to give an authentic Islamic solution to the problems faced by community

members. *'Ulama'* imported from India, Pakistan or the Middle East have little understanding of western culture or the pressures encountered by the modern youth. Frequently, these scholars are not able to converse in English and the contents of their sermons are deemed by many to be irrelevant to modern issues.[108] While the traditional *'ulama'* have not been able to address issues posed by the younger generation, Muslim intellectuals and leaders who have become a significant part of the American academic scene have been able to provide an interpretation of Islam relevant to life in America as well as to the modern world.

Shi'i scholars like Mahmoud Ayoub, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Seyyid Hossein Nasr and Soroush have been able to capture the imagination of many Shi'is living in America and abroad. In recent years, statements made by these scholars as a result of their academic research have differed with views traditionally enunciated by the *'ulama'*, thus challenging their authority as the sole interpreters of the teachings of the *ahl al-bayt*. In particular, there is much debate in the Shi'i community on topics like religious pluralism, apostasy, slavery, the testimony and inheritance rights of women and the correct mode of dressing for women. Views of Shi'i scholars trained in both the traditional centers of Islamic learning and in the universities differ appreciably from those propounded by the *'ulama'*.

The community is becoming aware of the need for Islamically trained but indigenous American religious leadership.

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108 See also Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, *Islamic Values*, 63.

This is also because the ambit of activities that the imams have to perform in America has increased considerably. Besides offering basic religious services, they are also required to provide pastoral care, counsel members of their congregation, visit the sick and needy, adjudicate on disputes between members of the mosque, participate in interfaith dialogue, and promote a positive understanding of Islam.[109]

To produce indigenous scholars who can provide an authentic Islamic solution to the challenges of living in the west, some members of the Shi'i community established an Islamic seminary (*hawda*) in Medina, New York in the 1980s. After completing four years of studies, many students trained at Medina were sent to Iran for further studies. Others chose to serve local Shi'i communities. However, the courses taught at the Medina seminary closely resembled the subjects offered in Qum (Iran) and Najaf (Iraq). Since these courses do not relate to issues pertaining to Muslims in the West, students who have graduated from the seminary have yet to make a significant impact on the religious lives of Shi'is in America.

In addition to the 'traditional' syllabus currently being offered, courses on comparative religions, Islam in the modern era, Islam in America, history of religions and methods of studying religious texts should also be taught. On its part, the Shi'i community should be supporting the Medina school wholeheartedly. Training our own 'homebred' '*ulama*' for the future is essential if the message of the

[109] On the increased role of imams in America see Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, *Islamic Values*, 59.

ahl a/-bayt is to be delivered potently to the future generation of the Shi'i community.

There are great differences, for example, in the attitudes taken toward the Western way of life. Community leaders who have been raised in the North American environment understand well the problems of adjustment that Muslim immigrants face. Generally, however, they have little grounding in the sources of Islamic tradition that can provide solutions to these problems. On the other hand, religious leaders imported from other countries generally are thoroughly versed in the religious tradition, but often have little understanding of the problems encountered by believers in the North American context. This situation has made it extremely difficult for members of the Shi'a community to keep the younger generation interested in the Islamic faith. Thus far the solutions offered by community leaders have been temporary, failing to affect the resolution necessary for the future religious loyalty and spiritual well-being of the members. The lack of religious leaders who are both locally trained and fully instructed in Islamic tradition has been identified by many Shi'is as the most urgent concern facing the future survival of the community in the secular Western environment.

The Shi'i community in North America also needs a central body which would issue general guidelines to member institutes. Presently, there are an increasing number of centers with little correlation between them. To unite the different Shi'i ethnic entities the *ahl al-bayt* assembly of America was formed in 1996. The assembly's stated aim is to promote Islamic teachings according to

the Qur'an and *sunna* as interpreted by the household of the Prophet. The assembly's mandate also requires it to introduce Islamic education, produce and distribute Islamic literature and communicate with the media to provide an Islamic perspective to news items affecting the Muslim world.

During its three years of existence, the *ahl al-bayt* assembly has serviced the needs of the Shi'i community in Washington D.C. However, it has failed to realize its goal of uniting the Shi'i community in America. The attempted unification of different ethnic centers under an eclectic and centralized institute that would provide strong leadership to the American Shi'i community still remains a distant dream.

The Views and Criticisms of the Shi'i '*Ulama*'

Presently, the Shi'i community in North America comprises of about one hundred and forty religious scholars most of whom originate from the Middle East or the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent. The majority of these scholars are affiliated to a center and perform basic Islamic functions like leading prayers, delivering sermons, performing funerals and marriages etc. However, as we have previously mentioned, the council of '*ulama*' has so far failed to bring the scholars together or unite the community behind a fixed agenda.

The Shi'i leadership is hampered by the fact that there is no nationwide organization that could bring the different Shi'i factions together. As we mentioned in the last chapter, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Islamic Circle of North America

(ICNA) hold annual conferences at which different ethnic Sunni groups meet. The fact that no such Shi'i conferences are held is a big disadvantage for the Shi'is because the leaders are not able to communicate with the different factions of the community and to address some of the challenges and suggest some possible solutions. Such a gathering would also force the leadership to respond to the questions and address the concerns of members of the community.

I spoke to some '*ulama*' on various issues regarding the Shi'i community in North America. The issues discussed were: the role that the *maraji'* can play in North America, leadership within the North American Shi'i community, the needs and challenges confronting the North American Shi'is, the relationship between the *marja'iyya* and the Shi'i community in North America and how the events of September 11, 2001 have impacted the Shi'i community.

The '*Ulama*' in North America

Most imams that we spoke to confirm our observation above, that there is little communication or sense of direction even between the '*ulama*' in North America. Shaykh Mukhtar Fyzee has recently opened an Islamic center in Chicago. His center is quite different in that the emphasis is on the young generation and most of the lectures are delivered in English. In addition, since there is no partition to separate women and the men, women can actively participate in the functions that are held.

Shaykh Fyzee is quite forthright in his views. He states that there is a dire need for scholars who can communicate with each

other and with the masses. There is also a need to communicate with experts in other fields of life. The '*ulama*' need to mobilize and communicate with community leaders and be involved in the community, he said. Shaykh Fyzee adds that some '*ulama*' work as employees while others do not seem to be too concerned about the affairs of the community. Instead, they live in their own ivory towers. Shaykh Fyzee continues that there is a need for humble '*ulama*' who are aware of the needs of the times so that they can perform their tasks as religious guides. He also states that there has to be a connection between the '*ulama*', community leaders, and University professors. He feels that Shi'i scholars teaching in the Universities have to be drawn into the discourse especially as they interact with the masses and are aware of the needs of the times.

Another 'alim, who asked not to be identified (I shall call him alim X), says there are two types of '*ulama*'. The traditional '*ulama*' see their task as that of delivering sermons, holding ritualized events like Muharram programs and other routine activities. Their speeches, alim X continues, are not connected to the daily lives of the people. These are the majority of the '*ulama*', he states. Alim X is even more scathing in his remarks. Some of these traditional '*ulama*' even bring their village mentalities from their home countries to America.

However, there are other '*ulama*' who are more open to political participation; they are more dynamic because they do not live in the past. Rather, alim X states, they mobilize Muslims so as to actively contribute to the American milieu. Unfortunately, these genres of alims are few in numbers.

Overall, alim X continues, the '*ulama*' do not work in unison. There is no council that will bring them together; neither do they have a common agenda. A post Ramadhan conference on the '*ulama*' was convened in 2004 for a specific agenda. Not all the '*ulama*' are interested in attending the conference alim x stated. The '*ulama*' have established their own centers, and, due to this and other factors, there is nothing to bring them together.

Another prominent scholar, Shaykh Fadhil Sahlani of New York states that the '*ulama*' are divided among themselves. Sahlani suggests that there is a need for a budget to create a network that can unite centers. A central body is required that can link the various groups and scholars at the same time. There is some but not much unity among the '*ulama*' says Sahlani. Shaykh Jawad Ansari is another important scholar living in Dearborn. He states that the '*ulama*' lack the academic qualities and required organizational skills. They are too involved with their centers and people. Due to this, there is a lack of direction within the broader community. There is much unity between humble '*ulama*', but not between the non-humble '*ulama*, he continues'. What is remarkable is that many of the '*ulama*' we spoke to in North America voice the same views and complaints on these issues. They complain of divisions within the scholars and the need to establish a nationwide body that will bring the scholars together so that the needs of the community are addressed.

A scholar from the Washington area, Shaykh Haeri, states that the '*ulama*' are doing a fine job, although more can be done. Shaykh Haeri hints at a possible reason for the division between the

'*ulama*'. He sates that scholars need to be more tolerant, and need to accept the existing differences among them regardless of which *marja'* they follow. He further adds that many Shi'i '*ulama*' sit with Sunnis to discourse, however, there is a paucity of such discussion between the Shi'i scholars. He further adds that there is a need for more '*ulama*' in North America. Qum and Najaf should train more scholars for the North American environment. The problem is that some scholars divide and differentiate themselves based on which *marja'* they follow even though the *maraji'* do not do this, Shaykh Hacri adds. He points to an issue that many scholars hinted at but did not elaborate on, i.e., that the scholars are divided due to the different *maraji'* they are affiliated to.

Shaykh 'Attar hails from the Los Angeles area. He states that the '*ulama*' need to identify and correct the mistakes of the past. Unfortunately, they still persist in committing these errors. There is no unity among the '*ulama*', he complains. Although many do not want to be identified in public, the '*ulama*' are clearly are concerned at the lack of direction and unity among themselves, and that, due to the lack of direction and vision, the Shi'i centers are divided. The remarks made by the religious leaders are important leads to our understanding of some of the challenges confronting the Shi'a community in North America.

In the '*ulama*'s conference in November 2004 we realized that many scholars did not attend as it was arranged under the auspices of the office of Ayatullah Seestani. Therefore, some '*ulama*' added, it is better that the name of Ayatullah Seestani be removed so that the conference should not be affiliated with any

particular *marji'*. This points to a major issue facing the Shi'i community and the '*ulama*' – the *maraji'*.

The *Maraji'* and the Community

An important issue for the Shi'a community is the degree to which the *maraji'* can relate to the needs of the community in North America. Imam Muhammad Ilahi is the Imam at the Islamic House of Wisdom in Detroit. He states that, in his view, the *maraji'* do not view North America as a priority. This is because they probably have more pressing issues and challenges in their own countries. Imam Ilahi adds that, to better serve the needs of the North American community, there should be long term planning in the *hawza* (Islamic seminaries) as this is the primary source of religious education. The *hawza* should consider the needs in the West, and prepare scholars who can fulfill those needs.

He further adds that there is a need to prepare a curriculum in the *hawza* that will cater for the needs of Muslims in the West. The *hawza* needs to train scholars who can reach both Muslims and non-Muslims in North America. In the final analysis, there is a need to establish a fully-fledged seminary in the west since those scholars who are trained here will be more versed with the needs and culture of the West. Hence, they will be better equipped to serve the local community.

Shaykh Salim Bhimjee is affiliated to the Islamic Humanitarian Service in Kitchner, Canada. He is engaged in many outreach (*da'wa*) related activities. In addition, he has translated many works. As far as the *maraji'* are concerned, he believes that

they need to play a more active role in the lives of the community members in North America. He states that, at the moment, there is no proper liaison between the community and the *maraji'*. This creates a vacuum in the leadership of the community. He suggests the need to establish a hierarchical leadership along the lines of the Vatican whereby bishops and cardinals represent the Pope to the community. Similarly, there should be representatives of the *maraji'* who should be in continuous communication with them. Bhimjee also states that due to this vacuum, the *maraji'*s guidance is not reaching the Shi'i community in North America. Moreover, he adds, the system of communication between the *maraji'* and the masses needs to be more structured and organized.

Such views were not shared by Shaykh Shafiq Hudda, who is also affiliated with the Islamic Humanitarian Services in Kitchner, Canada. According to Shaykh al-Hudda, the *maraji'* communicate effectively to the community in North America. They send speakers here, and, in addition, the Shi'is get regular messages from the offices of *maraji'* through various modes of communication. Thus, he states, the *maraji'* are well aware of the needs of the communities.

Echoing the sentiments that many '*ulama*' have voiced, Shaykh Fyzee states that presently, communication with the *maraji'* is not very good. He states that most *maraji'* are leaders of their home town or country. There is no overall plan for the Shi'a community in the world. The *maraji'* send good wishes, but do not know of our needs. After the revolution in Iran, the community hoped for and expected much but received little from the *maraji'*.

Fyzee adds that the *maraji'* should liase with the '*ulama*' in North America. In addition, they should visit or send their trusted envoys here, not merely for the sake of collecting monies. The Shi'i community in the West must also talk to the *maraji'* and make them more aware of their needs.

Reflecting a rather different view, Shaykh Fadhil Sahlani states that the *maraji'* work well through their agents and centers. The *maraji'*'s capacity is in some cases limited due to the socio-political circumstances they find themselves in their countries of residence. Due to these circumstances, they may not be able to play as prominent a role as they would wish.

Alim X is quite critical about the role of the *maraji'*. He states that many *maraji'* adopt a very traditional and what he terms a 'weak' approach. There is no strong connection between the *maraji'* and two million Shi'is in America. In fact, alim X states that the *maraji'* are almost absent in the lives of many Shi'is. Their representatives visit North America to collect the religious taxes, the *khumus*. However, there are some *maraji'* who have indicated more interest in and willingness to connect with the American Shi'is. Although their approach is based on their own interests, they do try to connect with the Shi'is. Some target specific ethnic groups, by sending their literature and sermons to these groups. This creates a partisan following, at the expense of other *maraji'*. Due to the *marji'* factor, alim X feels that the Shi'a community in North America has become more fragmented. However, the *maraji'* also help the Shi'is to spread the message of Islam and the progeny of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The fact that the alim requested

not to be identified indicates the problem of the *marja'iyya*. Alim X is aware of the sensitivity of the issue and does not want to be stigmatized by the community. At the same time, he feels that the problem of the *marja'iyya* and the division it has created has to be addressed.

Shaykh Jawad Ansari states that centers which are run by agents of the *maraji'* are better organized. The *maraji'*, he adds, should advocate and promulgate certain principles which would help the Shi'i community. Here, he is thinking of *'adala* – upright moral leadership of the community. Besides the socio-political situation of the Shi'is, the *maraji'* should also be concerned with level of education among the Shi'is in North America.

For Shaykh Haeri, the *marja'iyya* is an umbrella of all Shi'a organizations. The *maraji'* should be aware of our needs. They must listen to the whole community. At the moment, he adds, this institution is not properly organized. Shaykh Haeri adds that the connection between the *maraji'* and the Shi'i communities will be enhanced if their agents visit us more frequently and go to different parts of America. In addition, these agents must also talk to the masses, not only to the leaders of the community. Shaykh Haeri further adds that sending one agent occasionally is not enough, the *maraji'* should be sending more agents. The *maraji'* are a blessing to us, he adds, and that people should be free to choose their *marja'* since one cannot force a *marja'* on another person.

According to Shaykh 'Attar the problem arises from both sides. The *maraji'* are not fully aware of the needs and issues of Shi'is in North America. We should also ask the question: "what

we can do for them?" We need to continuously inform the *maraji'*, not just through one or two people but by groups visiting and meeting them on a regular basis. The *maraji'*, on the other hand, should reach out and support all scholars. Shaykh 'Attar states that the scholars are the point of reference in North America, because the masses refer to the *maraji'* through them.

The different views of the scholars regarding the *marja'iyya* indicate clearly the challenges that the Shi'i community encounters. Due to different representatives of the *maraji'* who visit North America, the Shi'i community is often divided based on allegiances to the *maraji'*. In addition, there is limited communication between the *maraji'* and the community. Most scholars also added that the *maraji'* are not fully aware of the needs of the community and that the communication between the two has to be increased considerably.

The Shi'i Community in North America

I also asked the scholars on their views regarding the challenges, aspirations and visions of the Shi'i community in North America. When questioned about the state of the community, Imam Ilahi states initially that there is a need for a better understanding and promulgation of the teaching of *ahl al-bayt*, one that would be free of distortion. As far as the community is concerned, there is a need for more unity and communication between the centers. This corroborates our observation made in the last chapter, that there is a lack of awareness of the activities and direction of other centers. Furthermore, there is a paucity of collective leadership. Imam Ilahi

spoke at the UMAA conference in 2004. He believes that conceptually, UMAA has the capacity to grow into a uniting and cohesive force. Hence, he deems UMAA to be a very good project. However, it is still in an infancy and embryonic stage. Hence, it needs time to grow to develop as an effective institution.

According to Shaykh Shafiq Hudda, the community has made considerable progress in many facets. However, he continues, there is a need for more communication and interaction between the different groups. The community should be more politically active, and be more engaged in dialogue within and outside community. Also such views are echoed by other '*ulama*' too, there is very little direction offered as to how such ideals can be actualized.

Shaykh Bhimjee sees the issue of the community in a different way. He states that the community as a whole has a traditional mindset and is not open for change. For Bhimjee, the community has to re-evaluate its ways and visions for it to progress. Like many other scholars we spoke to, Bhimjee believes that there is a lack of religious leadership in North America. The leadership, he continues, must be proactive. Hence, Shaykh Bhimjee also believes that the *ahl al-bayt* assembly needs to be more active in bringing about this change. The assembly has met to discuss issues such as the citing of the moon; however, he adds, there are other more important things that should be addressed. It does not have a set agenda or direction for the community.

Shaykh Mukhtar Fyzee states that although the community is more active than before, it is not doing enough. There is a lot of room for improvement, he adds. The focus by the community is on

routine activities and for providing basic services, he states. This observation confirms what was mentioned in the last chapter. The survey indicates that most centers cater to the ritual requirements of the community but has no concrete proposals or agenda for the future.

What direction should the community take? Shaykh Fyzee states that there is a need to draw up a master plan. The community leaders need to map out a national vision, short and long term goals, and a road map. He further adds that currently, everyone is working in isolation. There is a need to identify religious and social needs of the community. Shaykh Fyzee is also concerned about education within the community. He argues that there is a need to establish a proper Sunday school, and for it to organize its resources. Shaykh Fyzee further states that some communities should initiate evening schools, and help tutor religious and secular education. In addition, he states that the community must take the initiative to educate itself more. He maintains that there is a need to translate important books in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), *tafsir*, *'aqaid* etc. The Sunnis have done that, but the Shi'a community has fallen behind in such ventures. Shaykh Sahlani agrees that there is no cohesiveness between the centers and that they do not work in a cohesive or coherent manner.

Sayyid Hasan al-Qazwini of Dearborn maintains that the community is greatly divided. Not only are the Arabs different from Persians and Pakistanis, even the Arabs are divided among themselves. Living in Dearborn, his experience tells him that Iraqi Arabs are different from Lebanese Arabs. There is no forum to

bring the diverse Shi'i groups together. Furthermore, Qazwini adds, many secular Iranians do not consider themselves as Shi'is.

Sayyid Qazwini further adds that the community is now becoming more aware of the needs of the youth. The youth are more educated, more publicly aware, and have a higher interest in public affairs. For him, the Shi'a community will be in a better position in the future due to the youths who are more concerned to reach out and to engage in other public activities. In addition, unlike their parents, American born youths do not carry a cultural baggage.

Sayyid Hasan al-Qawini further adds that there is no coordination or cohesiveness in the community although efforts are being made to create some unity. He states that UMAA, despite its imperfections, is a good start for provided a national platform.

Shaykh Falah Attar states that the community needs to define its goals carefully. Most communities work at local levels, however, he adds, there is no overall future plan or direction. There is no plan to attract non-Muslims to us.

The overriding concern among Shi'i scholars is the lack of unity and direction within the community. In addition, the scholars also point out to the lack of cohesion between the centers, the need to chart out a short and long term road map and to educate the community in both religious and secular issues. The '*ulama*' also indicate that the community is largely concerned with ritual issues.

The Impact of the Events of September 11, 2001

Even though the Muslim community has been present in America since the late nineteenth century, there was limited integration with non-Muslims before the events of September 11, 2001. However, in the past two years, Muslims have recognized that they cannot afford to live in impregnable fortresses and that living in a pluralistic milieu requires an active engagement with the other. The events of September 11 also proved to the American Muslim community, if any proof was needed, that pluralism in America is a social reality that it cannot escape from. In fact, many Muslims have become more visible, vocal, and extrovert while others have stressed their American rather than homeland identity.

Since the events of 9/11, Muslims have had to endure the USA PATRIOT (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act of October 24, 2001. The act sanctions the monitoring of individuals, organizations, and institutions without notification. Its provisions have been protested by American Civil Liberties Union. Several Arab and Muslim organizations have recently sued the American government insisting that the act is unconstitutional. Recent disclosure of secret wire-tapping of suspected terrorists and the federal government's admission that, in search of a terrorist nuclear bomb, it has run a far-reaching, top secret program to monitor radiation levels at over a hundred Muslim homes, businesses, and mosques in the capital region and in other areas, have all augmented Muslim concern regarding their civil rights. In numerous cases, the monitoring required investigators to go on to the property under surveillance, although no search warrants or court orders were ever obtained. In

December 2005, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), CAIR filed a request to access all government records relating to this program. Due to its efforts to safeguard the interests of the Muslim community, CAIR has emerged, in the eyes of many Muslims, as the Muslim equivalent of the Jewish Defence League.

Since the events of 911, Muslims have also realized that, due to the activities of terrorists, both their Islamic identity and American citizenship are at stake. The Muslim community has acknowledged that the silent majority syndrome has to end simply because Muslim acquiesce has encouraged an extremist expression of Islam. It is the extremists who have spoken on behalf of Islam as their acts of violence have drowned the silent voices of the Muslim majority. Thus, many Muslims have felt the need to integrate themselves in the mainstream American society so as to make their voices heard. This indigenization of American Islam represents a silent revolution that many Muslims have been engaged in since September 11, 2001.

Indigenization of American Islam is the process of identifying, understanding, and relating to the culture, heritage, and the history of America. Indigenization also means carving out a space for oneself in American society, being more appreciative of American values while remaining authentic to Islam. An essential element of the indigenization of American Islam is the Muslims' identification with American culture and values, and their distancing themselves from the back-home mentality. Indigenization also means viewing American secular culture as a

challenge to be comprehended and tolerated rather than a threat to be confronted, for the latter approach can breed a culture of negative isolation and fear of the other.

The process of the indigenization of American Islam is intertwined with the construction of a distinctly American Islamic civic identity. This process has expressed itself in different forms. Muslims have joined forces with various peace and anti-racist movements. Muslim groups have also been involved in various social programs like food drives and have sought to help homeless Americans. For example, in October 2003, a new campaign called Ramadhan action for human rights was launched in Denver. In Duluth, Minnesota, Muslims have raised funds to support social services, including housing and health care initiatives for the poor. In addition, since September 2001, various Islamic centers have facilitated "open-mosques" hours and have tried to become more "people friendly" by encouraging their non-Muslim neighbors to visit the mosques.

Instead of denouncing American society and values, Friday sermons delivered in many mosques have focused on devotional, ethical, and historical topics. The community has also embarked on coalition building with human rights, religious rights, and civil rights groups. Muslim groups have been involved in various social programs like food drives and have sought to help homeless Americans.

The creation of an American Muslim civic identity can be also discerned from a recent advertisement placed by The Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) in some newspapers. It

shows a Muslim girl, wearing a headscarf, stating quite proudly, "I am an American, We are a Muslim." Interestingly, the American identity precedes the Islamic. Rather than focusing on American foreign policy, Muslims now tend to concentrate more on reconstituting their identity as American Muslims. Increasingly, domestic rather than foreign issues have become very important for American Muslims. In all probability, this is because as the second generation of Muslims in America identify with and assimilate in American culture, they develop a sense of patriotism leading to a greater politicization of the community and a sense of American national consciousness. Furthermore, Muslims have realized unless they become more vocal, they could become foreigners in their adopted homeland.

I spoke with Imams from various Shi'i centers in North America and asked them what effect, if any, the events of 911 had on them and their communities. The response we got was quite varied. When asked about the ramifications of 911, Imam Ilahi stated that since 911 there has been more focus in the American media on Wahhabism, the Taliban, and Saudi Arabia. Before 911, the focus in the West was on Iran and Somalia. For Imam Ilahi, the events of 911 have certainly changed a number of things. There has been connection with more churches. For example, soon after 911, churches called to offer support to Dar al-Hikma in Dearborn. Since 911, more interfaith functions have been convened. In addition, churches have become more active and more invitations have been extended to imams to speak in churches.

Speaking from a Canadian perspective, Shaykh Shafiq Hudda states that since 911, people have become more scared and cautious. Communities have become vigilant. Initially, the Shi'i community was more willing to open itself to the outside world. Now, there is more cucoonization, as the community has become more wary and even scared of the outside world. Thus, the community has become more introverted and reticent.

Shaykh Fyzee has a different view on 911. He says that the community missed a golden opportunity to reach out and present a good image of itself. Now, the community has realized that it is at the mercy of the media. In addition, the community has realized what it has failed to do over 20-30 years, i.e. have an effective outreach program. Even now, this has not been realized. Rather than reaching out after 911, the community lost out because it did not reach out to non-Muslims effectively.

Since 911, there have been no major changes, says Shaykh Sahlani. Some Shi'is are scared to participate in and donate monies to the Shi'a centers since 911, Shaykh Sahlani adds. However, in his view, nothing has changed for the Shi'i community since the events of 911.

The events of 911, says Sayyid Hasan al-Qazwini, had a negative impact on the Muslim community. However, it had a positive impact on the Shi'i community since the Wahhabis came to be identified as the perpetrators of the acts. Sayyid Qazwini states that the media no longer relies on the Wahhabi scholars, rather, now they are targeted. After 911, the Shi'a community has had a greater voice because it is seen as representing a more

moderate school. The media has also realized that the Shi'is do not promote violence. It is also worthwhile noting that Ayatullah Seestani's role in brokering peace between Muqtada al-Sadr and the American forces in Iraq in 2004 and his non-violent stance have all further nurtured the view of Shi'ism representing a moderate stance. The events of 911 have also meant that the Shi'is have come out of their enclaves. In addition, they have had more opportunities to speak on and represent Islam to their non-Muslim friends. Hence, 911 has provided new challenges to the community.

Shaykh Ansari agrees with the views stated above. He says that people are now more aware of Shi'ism. Before 911, Islam was equated with Sunnism, especially as many were not aware of the existence of the Shi'i school. People have realized that Shi'ism is more peaceful than Sunnism. There have been more opportunities to interact with and speak to the masses after 911.

Shaykh Attar states that the situation for Shi'is has not changed since 911. Due to the events in Iraq, the Shi'is are better known now. Unfortunately, there has been no plan to benefit from this opportunity, and that the rights of many Muslims in America have been violated. Shaykh Haeri believes that since 911, Shi'is have become defensive and are often cornered. However, like other scholars, he added that the Sunnis, more specifically the Wahhabis, have been known as violent whereas the Shi'is are projected as more peaceful.

It is clear that many scholars believed that the opportunity to promote a better image of Islam has been missed, primarily because Shi'is are more introverted. However, the scholars also agree that

since the Wahhabis have been exposed, the Shi'is have been seen in better light since 911. Numerous opportunities to dialogue have also arisen due to the events of 911.

The Conference of the '*Ulama*'

A conference of Shi'i scholars was held in New Jersey from November 16 – 18, 2004. Of the one hundred and forty scholars invited, only twenty five attended. This, in itself, is a testimony of the division and differences between the Shi'a scholars. The conference began with a call for unity between the scholars and communities so that the world Islam could be better projected and portrayed. Messages of support were also read from the office of Ayatullah Seestani. Privately, this conference was seen by many scholars as replacing the ineffective Council of '*ulama*' of North America. A constitution had been drafted and agreed at a meeting in Dallas in June 2004 and it was agreed to meet in New Jersey in Nov. 2004. Different issues were discussed in the conference. These ranged from social problems, marriage, *marja'iyya*, the presentation of Islam to non-Muslims, to the financial situation of the Shi'i community.

At the conference, the '*ulama*' agreed that the Council of '*Ulama*' has so far been largely ineffective. Due to the ineffectiveness of the '*ulama*', some Shi'is have even said they do not need the '*ulama*' to organize affairs of the community. The conference also agreed that there is a need for a proactive approach, of inter and intra-faith dialogue and expressed a desire to establish closer relationship between the '*ulama*'.

There were many issues that were raised at the conference. The following were the most salient points:

1) The need to create a Shi'i magazine in North America. This would act as the voice of the Shi'i community.

2) Governments, colleges, and churches should be informed on Islamic issues.

3) The need for a major da'wa center was discussed. Currently there is competition between muballighun (proselytes) to collect wealth and centers. Hence, there is a duplication rather than pooling of resources.

4) A uniform Sunday school curriculum that would be applied to all the Sunday schools in North America is also required.

5) The creation of religious teachers and missionaries.

6) The need to use television and radio to publicize Islam.

7) Place Shi'i books in libraries in North America.

8) The need to create a Shi'a lobby in the USA so as to defend the attacks against Islam.

9) The *marja'iyya* was to be involved in the conference. Privately, some said that as the conference was not backed by their *maraji'*, some '*ulama*' did not attend it.

10) The need to strengthen ties with *marja'iyya*.

The issue of *marja'iyya* was stressed repeatedly during the conference. The '*ulama*' stated that they should not be working for a particular *marja'*, rather, they should work for God. *Marja'iyya* has proven to be a source of disunity, some '*ulama*' said. Other scholars, however, disagreed with this view. One scholar stated that Islamic unity means unity from the heart. Even the *maraji'* are

calling for unity among the Shi'is. The point of reference should not be a *marja'*, rather, it was stated, it should be the *wilaya* (authority) of Imam 'Ali (AS). The twelfth Imam (AS), it was stated, is hurt when Shi'is disunite over *marja'iyya*. The fact that there was so much discussion over *marja'iyya* and a disagreement between the scholars as to whether it created disunity or not is itself a testimony to the problem of *marja'iyya*.

The conference members also agreed on the need to prioritize goals and divide them between long and short term. Most of the goals were seen as short term. Different committees were established and tasks assigned to each committee, ranging from public relations, to youths and marriage and *talaq*.

Shaykh Husham from Dearborn raised another important issue. He said that the '*ulama*' have been meeting since 1980s. Officially, this was the fourth conference. What have we achieved so far, he asked poignantly? Why has the council of '*ulama*' not achieved the goals it set out to achieve? How can the centers be brought together? How can the '*ulama*' themselves be united?

It was also stated that previous conferences have failed because there was no follow up, and because the '*ulama*' pursue their own ways after the conference finishes. Indeed, Shaykh Husham also stated that there was a lack of record keeping as to what was said and done during the preceding conference. Thus, at the next conference, the scholars had to start from scratch again. In general, the conference in New Jersey seemed to lack substance, was very general, abstract, and statements regarding the future vision were often vague.

Conclusion

The chapter has examined some of the exterior influences on the Shi'i community in America. More specifically, it has examined the authority and power wielded by the Ayatullahs in America. The *khumus* factor has enabled the Ayatullahs to establish their own centers, however, it has also become a source of dissension. Most of the religious scholars complained of poor communication between the Ayatullahs and their American followers. The scholars also complained of a lack of unity and direction between the '*ulama*' and also stated that the centers had no overall plan or vision for the future. The lack of an umbrella institution that would co-ordinate the resources and activities of the various centers and provide overall leadership to the Shi'i community was identified as one of the major needs of the communities. It is to the question of the outreach activities of the community that we turn to in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Shi'i Outreach Activities in North America

This chapter will examine some of the outreach and proselytization (*da'wa*) activities of the Shi'i community in North America. Initially, we will examine the reasons why Islam is the fastest growing religion in North America and the implications this has for the Shi'i community. To gain a comparative perspective, we will also consider *da'wa* activities by the Sunni community. This will provide us a framework with which to examine the outreach activities of the Shi'i community. In our discussion on conversion to Shi'ism, we will also draw on the results of a survey conducted with Shi'i inmates in various correctional facilities.

Why and how do people convert to Islam in North America? Why is Islam the fastest growing religion in North America? There are various factors that attract non-Muslims to Islam. Many convert to Islam after meeting a Muslim whom they wish to marry. As Muslims and non-Muslims meet in colleges, universities, and work places, the trend of inter-religious marriage has been increasing rapidly in the past few years. Twenty five per cent of marriages that we perform are between Muslims and recent converts to Islam. This trend is likely to increase especially as Shi'i communities in North America have not provided a proper forum for Shi'i girls and boys to interact before marriage. Since Muslim youth have more access to the opposite gender at their work places and colleges, they are more likely to marry outside rather than inside the community.

Indeed, many parents complain when their youths decide to marry someone who is outside their community especially as some convert for the convenience of living with their spouses rather than for a desire to become a Muslim.

The issue of marriage within the Shi'i community is highly contentious. Due to cultural and other restrictions, there are very few cases of inter-ethnic marriages within the community. Hence, since the Shi'a youth are not able to interact, there are few cases of, for example, a Pakistani boy marrying an Iraqi girl or a khoja boy marrying a Lebanese girl within the Shi'i community. In most cases, these youths tend to marry outside the community.

Besides marriage, there are other reasons for conversion to Islam. Many whites convert to Islam after joining Sufi groups. As we discussed in chapter one, Sufism attracts many converts due to its universal appeal and more ecumenical and tolerant message. In addition, Sufism is deemed to be attractive because it offers a spiritual and esoteric dimension rather than a purely outward path to God. This inner dimension is often lacking or de-emphasized in the West.

Many Sufi centers in North America have become focal points for holding weekly *dhikr* sessions and on special festivals like the *milad* of the Prophet or the birthday of the founder of the group. As mentioned in chapter one, there are some Shi'i Sufi groups who are active in cities in North America.

As far as African Americans are concerned, many of them embrace Islam as they see it as a religion of forebears. It is estimated that about fifteen percent of the slaves brought from

Africa were Muslims. Hence, Islam is seen by African Americans as the religion of their ancestors and, by converting to Islam, they affirm their African heritage and ancestral roots.

Other black and white converts are attracted to Islam due to its emphasis on discipline and purity. The fact that Islam prohibits alcohol, prostitution, drugs, free-gender interaction and abortion, is important as it enables converts to reform themselves and abide by much stricter rules. Islam also appeals to converts due to its insistence on upright human conduct, ethics, dignity, and hard work. This is one major reason why many blacks accepted the Moorish Science Temple (established in New Jersey in 1913 by Timothy Drew) and the Nation of Islam.

The Nation of Islam, which was established by Elijah Muhammad in the early 1930s in Detroit, attracted many converts due to the social services it offered to the black community. The movement appealed to many blacks as it created jobs for them, gave them a sense of dignity, and offered them a solution to the moral crisis they were confronted with. Converts were also granted protection and a new identity by the Nation of Islam. Despite its racist and heretical preaching, the Nation of Islam was able to reach out and convert many blacks to its brand of Islam.

The emphasis on hope for the future of the African-American community based on principles of dignity, hard work, and ethical living has characterized all of the indigenous African-American Islamic groups. Members are called to a transformation of life in which they are challenged to reach their best potential.

In addition, for many blacks, Christianity is viewed as a white man's religion. This is because they feel that Christianity condoned slavery and the ill-treatment that was meted out to many blacks. The fact that Islam is a color-blind religion and emphasizes equality and justice for all races is a great source of attraction to many African Americans. In addition, the fact that Islam is concerned with this world and the hereafter, and emphasizes social justice is another important factor for many who decide to embrace Islam.

There is another reason why Islam has proven to be attractive to many converts. This is because Islam is a religion with simplified beliefs. To become a Muslim, a person has to merely accept one God and the prophecy of the last Prophet (SAW). In contrast, Christianity contains beliefs that are considered mythical like those of the doctrines of trinity, the resurrection of Christ, and the belief in Jesus as the word of God. Many find such teachings difficult to comprehend and accept.

Islam is also attractive to many non-Muslims due to its emphasis on reasoning. Islam insists that people understand its principles of faith before they believe. In fact, most conversion to Islam is not instantaneous; rather, it is a gradual and rational process. Due to the rational component in Islamic theology, there are very few conversions that are a product of supernatural experiences.

I conducted a survey to examine the responses and feelings of African-Americans who converted to Shi'ism. In the survey,[110]

[110] See the survey of inmates at the end of this study.

the respondents cited multiple reasons for their conversion to Islam. The most important factor was that they thought Muslims were smarter people. In all probability, this response reflects the organization, bonding, and discipline that hold Muslim inmates together within the prison system. Another reason cited for conversion in the survey was that there was a perceived need to be close to Allah. This corroborates the view previously mentioned that many inmates feel that there is a spiritual vacuum within the prison system and that conversion to Islam instils hope and renewed vigor.

Survey one indicates that the majority of those who converted to Islam were either Christians or had no religion before conversion. None of them were Jews. This is consistent with what one would expect from the African-American community. For various reasons, Christianity could not fulfill their spiritual and religious needs, hence they searched for a religion that would strengthen and empower them. Clearly, most of those who convert are ex-Christians. They either convert directly from Christianity or become atheists and then accept Islam.

Shi'i ideals and beliefs have appealed to some African American movements. For example, according to the Ansar Allah, a black movement founded in the 1980s, the Prophet and Imam 'Ali were black. After he was denounced by the Saudis for his heretical beliefs, Issa Muhammad, the founder of Ansarullah, increasingly appropriated Shi'i ideas and beliefs in his movement. It is estimated that by 1982, with the influence of the Islamic revolution, one

thousand blacks had converted to Shi'ism in the Philadelphia area alone.[111]

Sunni *Da'wa* Activities

Before we discuss the genre of Shi'i *da'wa* activities, it is important to understand the history of Sunni outreach programs in North America. This will provide us a basis for comparison with Shi'i *da'wa* programs. The earliest movement that came to America to convert people to Islam was initiated by the Ahmadis. Mufti Sadiq Muhammad arrived to the American shores in 1920 and immediately began converting people to the Ahmadi version of Islam. He targeted the African-American community and published a newsletter outlining Islamic beliefs and practices. The movement continues until today although it is not as powerful as it was in the early twentieth century. This is because the Ahmadis have been declared as non-Muslims by most Muslim groups. The Ahmadis have also lost their potency due to the popularity of the Nation of Islam and other immigrant movements like the Tablighis and Jamaat Islami (see the following discussion for details of their views).

The Sunni community has been very active in *da'wa*. One of the main religious movements which has played a prominent role in the religious lives of American Muslims is the Tablighi Jamaat.

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Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 133.

This is a quietist movement of spiritual renewal, which originated in India seventy years ago. The goal of the Tablighi movement has been to permeate mainstream Muslim life by using mosques as bases for their activities.[112] They try to spread Islam among Muslims and even use the *hajj* season for converting Muslims towards their ideas. Tablighis prefer face to face encounters and relationships for communicating their message. Thus, they eschew powerful new media techniques in their efforts at proslytization. Being influenced by traditional Islam, the Tablighis have confined themselves largely to ritualistic elements of Islam. This has meant that they have been largely apolitical. In Canada, they have sought to take over the leadership of the mosques to make them "more Islamic." Due to their emphasis on purity, personal contact, and a return to the practices of the Prophet, the Tablighis have been quite successful in attracting adherents to their movement.

The Salafiyya, on the other hand, have emphasized a return to pristine Islam and to an understanding of faith exemplified by the early generation of Muslims. Their followers are composed primarily of Gulf Arabs with some American converts. The Salafiyya 'societies' are both ideologically and financially supported by the Saudi Arabian Embassy and Dar al-Iftah in Saudi Arabia. Their activities are restricted to educational topics of *aqida*

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[112] See Barbara Metcalf, "New Medinas: The Tablighi Jama'at in America and Europe", in Barbara Metcalf, ed., *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 113.

and a denunciation of Shi'is. Like the Tablighi groups, they are also against any political involvement in the USA.[113]

The Ikhwan al-Muslimun, on the other hand, has been instrumental in forming several Islamic organizations in America. The Muslim Student Association is a student body that was formed in 1963. It has often been a collaborative effort of Ikhwan members from Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Sudan.

Steve Johnson has shown that the religious affairs section of the Saudi Arabian Embassy has been successful in developing good relations with the African-American Muslim community. The Muslim World League (MWL), which was established in Saudi Arabia in 1962, assists Islamic Centers with holding youth camps, summer schools, and frequently provides teachers and imams for the centers. Khalil al-Khalil, supposedly a member of the Saudi Ikhwan, helped the embassy sponsor an intensive summer Arabic program primarily for the Afro-American Muslims. The participants were given free room, board, and a scholarship of at least five hundred dollars.[114]

By claiming to enhance religious awareness, several foreign countries have exerted considerable influence on the lives of American Muslims. In the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt was involved in the establishment of the Federation of Islamic Association and the Islamic Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., contributing substantial amounts of financial resources. In recent decades, Saudi

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[113] Ibid.

[114] 5. Ibid., 121

Arabia has emerged as a key player contributing to Muslim projects in America. For example, in 1978 it announced that it was contributing grants of upto three million dollars for building projects in North America.[115]

Saudi Arabia has sponsored expensive Islamic exhibitions in many cities and has also published a colorful introductory booklet on Islam. It has also sponsored the activities of the Muslim World League (MWL) in America. Thus, the MWL reflects Saudi religious interests in America, and, through various means, disseminates views attributed to the Wahhabis.

The involvement of the MWL in America is both extensive and diverse. It also provides funding for the construction of mosques, distribution of the Qur'an, and other educational information.[116] The MWL has also provided fellowships and grants for Muslim university professors. The diverse nature of the League's activities in America becomes clear from the fact that at the 1977 meeting in Newark, Ahmad Sakr, the former director of the MWL office to the United Nations and North America, reported that the MWL had helped to broadcast some Islamic television and radio programs.[117] Apart from supporting the proliferation of

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[115] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 30.

[116] Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 5.

[117] Poston, *Islamic Da'wah*, 127.

newspapers and Muslim journals, MWL has also published a considerable amount of Islamic literature for distribution.[118]

The MWL also exerts its influences by remunerating imams. According to Yvonne Haddad, twenty-six imams in the United States are supported by the MWL. Many of these imams are trained in the traditional Islamic sciences in the Middle East.[119] As the imams are not able to relate to the new ambience in the West, some mosques reject them. Their interpretation of Islam is very different from those that the locals are accustomed to. These imported imams are often viewed as too conservative and unable to cope with the demands of modernity. Thus many mosques reject foreign imams.[120] Hiring imams paid for by foreign countries also carries the additional burden of attached strings.

The MWL has also tried to proselytize in prisons. Thus, inmates are subjected to different groups competing for conversion.[121] After the death of Elijah Mohammed in 1975, his son Warith al-Din Muhammad initiated a series of reforms to bring his movement closer to mainstream Islam. He abandoned many of his father's heretical teachings regarding the supremacy of the blacks over the whites. Due to the pressure exerted from foreign forces, the movement that used to promote racist ideology now

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[118] Ibid., 128.

[119] Haddad, *Islamic Values*, 62-3.

[120] See the example of an imported imam in Lac La Biche, Canada, cited by Harold Barclay in Poston, *Islamic Da'wah*, 40.

[121] Besides the MWL and other groups like the Nation of Islam and Moorish Science Temple, various Shi'i organizations have also tried to reach potential converts. This has resulted in much Sunni-Shi'i altercations within the prison confines.

promulgates Islamic brotherhood. Warith al-Din also renamed all temples as mosques and phased out the 'savior's day' marking the birthday of the founder of the movement, Wallace D. Mohammed. He has also made frequent appearances on television with religious officials from Saudi Arabia.

Da'wa activities in the Shi'i Community

The above discussion on the *da'wa* activities in the Sunni community was essential so that we can comprehend how a similar outreach framework within the Shi'i community can be created. Like the Sunni community, the Shi'is have also sought to promote a better image of Islam and to proselytize. Shi'i outreach activities began in the 1970s, when many members of the Shi'i communities migrated to the American shores. In the late 1970s, foreign organizations such as the World Organization for Islamic Services sent books for distribution to Yasin al-Jibouri's Islamic Societies of Georgia.

The Bilal Muslim Mission, which has been proselytizing in East Africa since the 1960s, also sent many books to America. By July 1977, about 5,770 books and booklets had been mailed out.[122] In the 1980s, some centers and individuals engaged in outreach activities on an individual basis. Private Iranian sources like Ansariyan Publications based in Tehran sent Shi'i literature to American prisons. In recent years, the Canadian based Islamic

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[122] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah*, 128-129.

Research and Education Center started a correspondence course, teaching Shi'ism to potential or actual converts.[123]

Due to the relatively young age of many centers, few, if any, Shi'i mosques or centers in America have considered reaching out to non-Muslims or engaging in any inter-faith dialogue. Since most religious centers in America have been established fairly recently, Muslims have used their limited financial resources to establish and consolidate their centers rather than to build bridges outside the community. A question in the survey mentioned in chapter two related to the types of *da'wa* (missionary) activities undertaken by the centers. Most centers did not respond to the question. It was clear that most Shi'i communities emphasize providing religious services to their community members than to reaching out to the non-Muslim community.

In addition, other factors challenge the Shi'i community's capacity to actively engage in dialogue. The arrival of newer migrants has impinged on the American Shi'i community as it experiences Islam mainly through the phenomenon of 'imported Islam' and are highly resistant to change. Newer immigrants tend to revive traditional norms and impose a conservative and extraneous expression of Islam. In addition, immigrants also bring a more intense form of Islam, one whose discourse is frequently more polemic, re-asserting thereby the traditional demarcating lines between Islam and other religions. The immigrants' major concern

[123] This center is no longer functioning.

is to preserve the traditional expression of Islam than to reach out to potential converts.

The focus on preservation rather than extension of boundaries is further corroborated by survey five, which indicates that most converts from the Afro-American community convert to Shi'ism as a result of their own efforts and research rather than due to extensive proselytization from the Shi'i community. Survey five also indicates that fifty percent of those who converted from Sunnism to Shi'ism did so after their own research and study. This further confirms the view that when it comes to *da'wa*, the Shi'i community has been largely passive and inert.

Survey three indicates that most converts accept Islam because a friend approached them or their own exposure to Islam. They do not accept Shi'ism because they were approached by a Shi'i institution. This is a significant point because it indicates that the lack of *da'wa* activities by Shi'i organizations. Furthermore, survey three indicates that most converts espouse Shi'ism after having initially converted to Sunnism. It was only later that they become Shi'i s. Clearly, conversion occurs in following manner - Christianity to Sunnism, and then, later on, to Shi'ism.

It is also significant to note that survey five indicates that some converts accepted Shi'ism due to the proliferation of Sunni literature that disrespected and denigrated the Shi'is. This made them more curious and then led them to finding out more about Shi'i beliefs and practices. A similar number converted to Shi'ism because they were not allowed to prove the validity of their beliefs and practices.

Ironically, by their assiduous attacks on the Shi'is, the Wahhabis have aroused the curiosity of many converts who had not previously heard of Shi'ism. Most of those who convert to Shi'ism do so due to their own study of Shi'ism rather than due to extensive *da'wa* activities by the Shi'i community. However, as we will discuss, the writings of one convert in particular have had a remarkable impact on converting Sunnis to Shi'ism in America.

In addition to a lack of initiative, Shi'i proselytization activities in North American lack the financial support that is afforded, for example, to the Saudi-backed Muslim World League. There are no such institutions or countries that financially support Shi'i missionary work. Shi'i missionary activities have been limited to a few poorly funded organizations that are not properly structured for extensive *da'wa* (proselytization).[124] Thus, contrary to the Sunni experience, Shi'i discourse in the American public square is extremely limited. It is correct to state that American Shi'is are introverted rather than outward directed. The activities of most centers are directed to providing basic religious services like prayers, weddings, and funerals for community members.

The fact that the centers are introverted and do not reach out is seen by the fact that on average, only 1-2 African Americans attend the Shi'a centers (appendix eight in chapter two). Most centers do not engage in inter-faith dialogue, nor do they try to proselytize. Only fifty percent of the centers said African Americans frequent their centers, and on average only

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[124] I am grateful to Dr. Ahmad Hashim, a Shi'i proselyte living in Maryland, for sharing this observation with me.

one or two African Americans participate in the programs. This is further proof of a lack interaction between immigrant Shi'i communities and converts to Shi'ism.

The Influential Works of Muhammad Tijani al-Samawi

An important factor that has led to the conversion to Shi'ism in North American prisons in recent history is the writings of Muhammad al-Tijani al-Samawi. Born in Tunisia, Tijani was well versed in the Qur'an and religious sciences from his childhood. His position in the Sunni world was enhanced by his erudition and meetings with the teachers of Azhar in Cairo.

His first book, *Then I Was Guided,* is a moving account of an inner struggle that led to his conversion. It was when he was travelling from Cairo to Alexander on a ship that his preconceived notions about Shi'ism were challenged. His subsequent meetings with Ayatullah al-Khu'i and Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir Sadr in Najaf, Iraq, left Tijani perplexed and bewildered. He began to question his beliefs, and developed an inclination toward Shi'ism. He thus started researching into Shi'i beliefs and practices. In his four main books, *Then I Was Guided, Ask Those Who Know, To Be with the Truthful Ones*, and *Shi'as Are the Real Sunnis*, Tijani utilizes Sunni *hadith* literature extensively to argue against and even challenge long held Sunni axioms.

In his writings, Tijani traces the provenance of Shi'i-Sunni disputes to the Prophet's time, exalting the virtues of early Shi'i heroes and chastising the companions for acts like fleeing battles and changing the *sunna* of the Prophet. Tijani proceeds to

emasculate Sunni arguments by questioning the integrity of Muhammad's companions. In this way he attacks one of the basic tenets of the Sunni Islam, namely, the belief in the upright character of all companions.

Having destroyed Sunni archetypal models, he replaces them with Shi'i ones. He contrasts the behavior of the disobedient companions with those who were completely loyal to the Prophet. Tijani thus turns the Shi'i-Sunni dispute on its head. The Shi'is, he claims, are the true Sunnis. They are the orthodox, the mainstream from which others have deviated. This is seen in the title of his fourth book, *al-Shi'a hum ahl al-sunna* (*The Shi'is Are the [True] Sunnis*). By making the Shi'is the true Sunnis, he makes the Sunnis the true Rafidis, i..e., rejecters of the Prophetic *sunna* which, according to Tijani, was preserved only by the household of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*). Tijani's works have had an enormous impact in American prisons where increasingly more Sunnis have converted to Shi'ism.

Da'wa in the Prison System

The best opportunity to promote Islam is within the prison system. However, even here, the Shi'is have lagged behind considerably. As we have previously mentioned, there are very few Shi'i institutes that have engaged in any *da'wa* activity and most have done this on their own initiative, with little financial and human resources. There is no overall umbrella institute to monitor, co-ordinate, or direct the activities, consequently, there is much duplication between the different institutes.

Shi'i proselytization activities in America are limited to institutes like the New York based Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Islamic Humanitarian Services in Canada, Bilal Muslim Missions of Americas. Individuals like of Dr. Hashim in Washington have also dedicated themselves to reaching out to non-Muslims. We will discuss the activities of such institutions later on in this chapter.

Survey nine confirms the view that that there is a lack of communication between Shi'i institutes and the inmates. Fifty percent of the inmates said that they had tried to communicate with Shi'i organizations. However, they also reported that they lack communication with people in the Shi'i community who are able to help them. When asked about their needs, the inmates said that they need answers as to how the *shari'a* is to be practiced in the USA. However, some inmates said that there were some positive response and books have been sent from Trinidad, Iran, and Lebanon. The majority complained that they felt isolated.

Another major challenge confronting the Shi'i inmates is that they encounter widespread discrimination and pressure to renounce their faith. Many inmates complain that Shi'i books kept in the prison libraries have been removed by Sunni inmates. The acrimony between the two groups has often led to physical confrontation within the correctional facilities and to some inmates being placed in isolation 'boxes'. Shi'i inmates now demand lectures that reflect their own faith and the right to perform rituals according to Shi'i law. Many inmates are also tormented by hearing anti-Shi'i propaganda in the classes conducted or in Friday

sermons. There are very few correctional facilities that offer classes catering to the Shi'is.

Survey eight indicates that most Shi'a inmates complain that they have suffered some form of discrimination. Eighty eight percent of the inmates said they were verbally assaulted by Sunni inmates. Seventy five percent said that the Sunnis tried to convince them that Shi'ism is wrong. Such figures and statements are indicative of the various kinds of pressures that many inmates experience. A similar number of inmates complained that only Sunni books are kept in the prison libraries. This further reinforces the lack of support that Shi'i inmates receive from the Shi'i community. Another major challenge that was reported by the Shi'i inmates was that, despite voicing their complaints, they are not allowed to observe Shi'i practices and holidays (like Ashura) in prison facilities.

The kinds of pressure that Shi'i inmates have to endure becomes evident in survey six. It indicates that a significant portion of respondents (38%) said they had concerns about accepting Shi'ism. Some inmates felt they were out of place because they were Shi'is, others were worried about their families' reaction. Having converted to Shi'ism, all of them reported that they experienced difficulties. The difficulties included:

1) Denied rights of being a Muslim by non-Shi'is (they cannot vote for a leader, and cannot hold positions in mosques in prisons)
2) Lack of access to Shi'i literature
3) Sunnis turning their backs in times of difficulty

4) To non-Muslims Shi'ism is a stereo type of 'suicidal terrorist'
5) One of the respondents was even accused of trying to assassinate a Sunni amir in the facility.

In the late 1990's, a convert called Frankie Cancel filed a lawsuit against the New York State as they did not provide services for the followers of the *ahl al-bayt*. After a lengthy court battle and an appeal, Cancel's case was vindicated. The court ruled that Shi'i inmates were right in demanding services that reflected their religious needs especially as there was widespread discrimination against them by the Sunni community. The court also allowed Shi'i chaplains to conduct services and classes in New York state. However, to date, very few Shi'i imams visit the prison system to conduct classes or provide religious services.

For those who have converted, there are enormous social pressures to reject Shi'i Islam. Especially after the events of 911, many inmates suffer by accepting Islam. Converts who come to mosques feel isolated especially as they have abandoned their family ties. They are also marginalized in the mosques as they do not fit within the framework of the ethnic centers we described in chapter two. There is minimum social or religious contact between immigrant Shi'is and African-American Shi'is. As we have mentioned in chapter two, the ethno-cultural component is an important factor in Shi'i concept of identity in North America. In response to the marginalization they encountered, in some areas like New York and Rhode Island, African-American Shi'is have chosen to establish their own mosques.

Immigrants expect converts to absorb not only Islam but also their own national or cultural identities. Converts become cultural chameleons since they are expected to absorb not only a new belief system but also to adjust to different Shi'i cultures and identities which are often imposed on converts. This creates much resistance and tension between immigrant communities and converts.

The Needs of the Shi'i Converts

It is important to remember that conversion is not an event; rather, it is a process. Stated differently, *da'wa* does not stop when a person accepts Islam. Conversion to Islam is just the beginning of the process. There is a need to train those who have converted, help them find jobs, spouses, and to help them integrate within the Shi'i community.

What are the most important needs of these Shi'i inmates? Survey seven shows that they include the following: The need to have access to a Shi'i imam, *'alim* or scholar, the need to have books on Shi'ism and the time to offer obligatory prayers. Survey nine asked how the Shi'i community could help their incarcerated brethren. The major suggestions include:

Help them get their rights to practice their religion
Maintain communication
Establish correspondence
Create a means of communication with the *maraji'*
Visit the inmates
Provide literature for them.

A question in the survey (survey ten) asked the inmates as to how the Shi'i community could help them after they were released. The response included that they should not be considered as ex-cons, the community should support their religious endeavors, help find residence and work, create a one hundred and twenty day release program to assist Shi'i prisoners. Some also stated that the community should assist them find a Muslim wife.

Interfaith dialogue

Another important dimension of outreach activities is through inter-faith dialogue. In the past few years, American Muslims have recognized the need to express themselves through a properly articulated intellectual discourse, so that they may be both physically and intellectually visible. They have sought to go beyond the history of hostility, caricature, and power struggles that have characterized relations between Christians and Muslims in the past. It is correct to state that the Muslims' struggle in North America has been not only to co-exist with the other, but also to make themselves comprehensible in the American milieu, to de-mythify and de-code Islam and to challenge its negative portrayal in the media.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed increased animosity towards Arabs and Muslims in the United States. In all probability, domestic groups like the conservative wing of the Republican Party, Christian fundamentalist groups, and the pro-Israel lobby were responsible for encouraging the anti-Islamic rhetoric. American hostility toward Islam and Muslims was also

precipitated by various events oversees. These included: the six day war in 1967, the Yom Kippur war and oil embargo of 1973, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the hostage crisis in Iran and Lebanon, PLO attacks against Israeli targets, the Rushdie affair of 1989, and the Gulf Wars.

Such events precipitated measures that led to the targeting and racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims, along with a growing atmosphere of hostility towards Islam. As a matter of fact, a scheme known as Operation Boulder placed Arab-Americans under FBI surveillance in the early 1970s.[125]

Increased government surveillance and discriminatory policies forced Muslims to abandon their traditional ambivalent stance toward political intervention. They quickly realized that it was only by participation in the American order that Muslims could enjoy protection against government agencies that disregard the constitution and violate civil liberties. Political and social activism could also persuade policymakers to counteract American resentment against Muslims. In addition, the Muslim community perceived the need to bring its members closer, especially as many of them had settled in remote parts of America. These factors led to the establishment of various Islamic institutions. Muslims have also sought to establish relationship with non-Muslims.

Especially since the events of September 11, both Muslims and Christians in America have realized that it is better to speak

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[125] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "American Foreign Policy in the Middle East," 220.

with, rather than about, the other. The increased dialogue and interaction between Muslims and Christians represent a significant paradigm shift, from attempts at conversion of to those of conversation with the other. It has to be remembered that for most members of the Muslim community, dialogue between people of different faiths, in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance, is a relatively new phenomenon. In their own countries, Muslims did not, generally speaking, feel the need to dialogue or converse with the other. Hence, engaging in dialogue with non-Muslims is a relatively new experience for most Muslims, since many of them are accustomed to preaching Islam and to refuting the beliefs of the other.

Due to the negative Western image of Islam in general and Shi'ism in particular, some Shi'is centers have initiated dialogue with local communities to promote a more tolerant understanding of their faith. The Islamic Education Council of Maryland organizes annual inter-faith events that discuss topics affecting other faith groups in America. Issues like marriage and the importance of inculcating proper values in modern youths have been discussed with local Christian and Jewish communities. The Khu'i Foundation of New York also participates in a number of national, international interfaith and intrafaith initiatives. The Islamic House of Wisdom (IHW) in Dearborn is more open to interfaith dialogue and adopts a more liberal view toward American society since the Imam of the center, Imam Ilahi, is considered to be "liberal" and "open-minded".

Accommodation to North American society and refusal to compromise with the West is contingent on the origins and outlook of the imams serving a center. IHW's community newsletter of December 1998, called *Salaam*, proudly states: "With the spirit of giving thanks to God for all His blessings, the Islamic House of Wisdom opened its doors to metro Detroit's premier interfaith event: the Interfaith Family celebration of Thanksgiving on Wednesday evening, November 25 (1998)". Imam Ilahi goes on to say: "Islam is the most misunderstood religion in this country and hopefully by showing our openness, respect and love for our guests, we will have an opportunity to remove some of this misinformation about our faith".

Areas that have a sizable Shi'i community engage in more dialogue with other communities. Several institutions broadcast lectures on television. "Salaam" is a new channel run by some Shi'is in Los Angeles. Many Shi'i scholars appear regularly, giving lectures on diverse topics. In fact, Los Angeles has witnessed occasions where Christians and Jews have been invited to mosques to participate in inter-faith dialogue.

The challenge for North American Shi'is is two-fold: to ensure that the younger generation within the community does not get assimilated with the West and that it does not get influenced by anti-Shi'i propaganda instigated by Wahhabis. In America, Shi'is have been more concerned with maintaining their distinct communal and sectarian identity than with engaging in dialogue with other faith groups. Moreover, since they form a small percentage of the wider Muslim community in America, the

primary focus for the Shi'i community has been the preservation rather than extension of their spiritual boundaries. This is corroborated by the survey mentioned in chapter two which indicates that most centers to not engage in widespread inter-faith activities

Sunni – Shi'i Interaction

An important dimension of the Shi'i existence in North America is the community's relationship with fellow Muslims. Relations between Shi'is and Sunnis in North America have been contingent on political circumstances in the Middle East. In 1963, the Muslim Student Association was formed by students at the University of Illinois-Urbana. An important feature in the formative period of the organization was that commitment to Islam overrode sectarian considerations, with Sunnis and Shi'is worshipping together. Infact four early MSA presidents were Shi'is.[126] Upto the late 1970's, Sunnis and Shi'is often worked together, holding joint programs in the MSAs and even in the mosques. Yasin al-Jibouri recalls that in the 1970s, he could deliver sermons and lead prayers in a Sunni mosque despite his Shi'i affiliations.[127]

Gradually, the MSA has been influenced by events abroad. Ideological battles between Saudi Arabia and Iran have led to Shi'is being marginalized within the MSAs. Many Shi'i students

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126 Emily Kalled Lovell, "Islam in the United States:Past and Present" in Earle Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban and Regula Qureshi eds., in *The Muslim Community in North America* (Edmonton:University of Alberta, 1987), 105.

127 This was related to me in a personal interview.

complain of enduring religious discrimination, of being barred from participating in MSA activities, and of Sunni imams reviling Shi'is in Friday sermons. The fragmentation of the Muslim student body has often resulted in altercations between Shi'is and Sunnis in many campuses leading to Shi'is establishing parallel student groups in some universities. In the 1990s, Shi'i students at the University of Toronto, for example, founded their own *ahl al-bayt* organization. They held services on campuses separately from their Sunni brethren. Shi'is at all three campuses of the University of Toronto have now established the Thaqalayn Muslim Association. In some campuses, Iranian students have created the Muslim Student Association Persian Speaking Group (MSA/PSG).

The other major challenge confronting the American Shi'i community is to defend itself from the verbal accusations and attacks by the Wahhabis. Arguably, this is the most potent challenge since it threatens to destroy the very fabric of Shi'i beliefs and practices. In the last two decades, Sunni-Shi'i tensions have surfaced in America. Verbal attacks against Shi'is are evident in mosques, at the University campuses, on the internet, and, as we have discussed, even in correction facilities. In many cases, Shi'is have been denounced as unbelievers. This is another reason why Shi'is have been more preoccupied with preserving rather than extending their social compass. Shi'i Muslims residing in America find themselves in a novel situation insofar as they are in a double minority status. They form a minority within the larger American community and are a minority group within the Muslim community. On the one hand, there is pressure to assimilate and

acculturate in a pluralistic socio-religious ambience. Yet there is concurrent pressure exerted by the majority Sunni community who question the very validity of Shi'i beliefs and practices.

Polarization within the Muslim community has been further exacerbated by the influx of conservative immigrants. Increased immigration has resulted in the spread of a conservative spirit among many institutions, accentuating thereby sectarian divisions and disputes between the two schools of thought. Immigrant communities have also brought their own bitter experiences and prejudices. Hence, there is a tendency to replicate what prevailed in the past, making, in the process, North America a battleground for sectarian differences.

Anti-Shi'i literature such as *Khutut al-Areedha* and *Up from Shiism* has been widely distributed in America.[128] Such literature has denounced Shi'i beliefs and practices and have projected Shi'ism as an aberration from mainstream Islam. The Shi'is have responded by translating and circulating the works of Muhammad Tijani. Shi'is complain that their precepts and praxis are attacked more by Sunnis than by non-Muslims. Both Sunni and Shi'i Imams have tried to diffuse sectarian tensions. Many Sunni–Shi'i conferences are held in which members of both communities are invited to participate. Although a Shi'i, Imam Mustafa al-Qazwini interacts regularly with Sunni Imams. He is a member of the *shura* council which is composed of seventy Imams from both Sunni and

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[128] Steve Johnson, "Political Activity of Muslims in America" in Yvonne Haddad, ed. *The Muslims of America*, 119.

Shi'i mosques. Imam al-Qazwini sometimes invites Sunni Imams to speak at Shi'i events in his mosque in Orange County, California.[129]

Leaders within both communities are anxious to unite the two groups. At a banquet held by the weekly newspaper *Muslim Observer* in Detroit, a Sunni Imam led the evening prayers. To emphasize the ecumenical goals of the newspaper, a Shi'i Imam led the night prayers later on.

Inter-faith Activities by the Community

The terrorist attacks of September 11 revived prejudices of Islam as a religion that promotes violence and of Muslims as an inherently militant and irrational people. In addition, the American global war on terror and the invasion of Iraq have invigorated the stereotypes and suspicions against Muslims, especially those of Middle Eastern origins. Furthermore, the vitriolic attacks on Islam and the Qur'an by some Christian fundamentalists have clearly exacerbated the current conflict in America. They have posited and projected Islam as inherently violent, and incompatible with Western values and norms. Such destructive mythification is often born in spaces of non-contact, adversarial contact, or ignorance. It therefore becomes imperative that Muslims engage in dialogue to counter such depictions of Islam and Muslims.

There is an urgent need to prepare literature that can be sent to schools, churches, hospitals etc that can inform others about

[129] I am grateful to Imam al-Qazwini for sharing his personal observations with me.

Islam in general and Shi'ism in particular. A short video titled "Introduction to Islam" was prepared by NASIMCO and distributed in 1995. This video, which has been widely distributed, has been very well received by many non-Muslim institutions.

There is also need to create an umbrella body that will co-ordinate tabligh activities of the Shi'a community. Currently, there is no central institution where non-Muslims can inquire about Shi'a faith. The masajid do not cater for converts or those who would like to have a better understanding or Islam. Most centers do not have proper literature or personnel who can help potential converts. There are no special classes conducted for those who have converted and the material recited in the lectures are not always relevant to the need for potential or recent converts. There is also a need to sponsor programs on television, radios and report in newspapers.

Da'wa can be done at different levels and different forms. For example, *da'wa* can be done at the university campuses, in prisons, through dialogue, on television, the media, and by collaborating in groups that undertake humanitarian work etc. The paucity of such activities is seen by the fact that at the '*ulama*'s meeting held in New Jersey in November 2004, the scholars unanimously agreed that this filed was one of the priority program that had to be instituted in the short term, that is within one year.

Shi'i *Da'wa* Institutes in North America

In this section, we will discuss the main *da'wa* institutes are currently in existence in North America and their major activities.

Islamic Humanitarian Services (IHS)

The Islamic Humanitarian Services operates from Kitchener, Waterloo in Canada. It has many outreach and humanitarian programs. The IHS hold weekly classes and sends literature to many correctional facilities. Since the events of 911, the IHS has noted that the demand for literature on Islam has increased considerably. When asked about the challenges confronting IHS, Shaykh Shafiq Hudda, the director, notes that a major umbrella body is needed as a resource center to coordinate the activities of the various institutes.

IHS has published various books, and engages in *da'wa* work in correctional facilities in USA. In addition, it has ventured into many humanitarian projects, including sending donations to BAM after the earthquake in 2004.

The United Muslim Women of Canada (UMWC) operates under the umbrella of the IHS. It runs a food bank whereby it provides free food to seventy needy families every month. Members of the bank also visit the sick in hospitals. UMWC also arranges social programs for seniors, helps them purchase groceries, and provides them with companionship. The UMWC also helps to mediate between families and tries to prevent family violence.

Alawi Foundation

As we have mentioned before, the Alawi Foundation in New York is a non profit organization formed under the laws of the State

of New York in 1973. The Foundation is the owner of more than fifty percent of an office building in midtown Manhattan. The Foundation's purposes are multi-purpose. It engages in charitable and philanthropic projects with an emphasis on education and civic concerns. One of its primary aims is to promote understanding and harmony among people of different religions. Another basic aim of the Foundation is to promote the study of the humanities, arts, and pure and applied sciences. The Foundation gives assistance to public charitable organizations during times of hardship and deprivation caused by war or natural disasters. It also provides financial assistance to non profit organizations that are involved in the teaching of Islamic culture and the Persian language. Currently, the Alawi foundation is sponsoring translation of the voluminous Qur'anic exegesis, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, of 'Allama Tabataba'i.

Universal Muslim Association of America

Universal Muslim Association of America (UMAA) seeks to provide a forum to foster unity among Muslims, to encourage Muslims to participate in the civic and political responsibilities, to dispel misgivings about Islam and the Muslims and to help fellow Americans better understand Islam in the light of Qur'an and the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his ahl al-bayt (AS), and to take all necessary measures to help implement the UMAA objectives. Among other things, these include:

Provide a Thinkers' Forum for Muslims living in the United States

Facilitate discussion on social, political and economic issues affecting the Muslim community

Encourage Muslims to vote and participate in the political process

Promote a better understanding of Islam through inter-faith dialogue

Encourage research on contemporary issues unique to Muslims living in the West

Coordinate with the media to help educate it on issues relating to Islam

Provide a common platform and forum for the Muslim youth

Organize conventions, seminars, and workshops to help achieve objectives

Publish newsletters, brochures, and written materials to impart information

Even at this embryonic stage, there has been much controversy regarding UMAA's agenda. Thus, at the 2nd UMAA Convention in May 2004, the secretary general of UMAA unequivocally rejected the view that it is a supporter of the American led coalition's operations in Iraq. In addition, it was reiterated that UMAA is an inclusive organization, with associates and members reflecting many shades of opinions. Reflecting the criticisms it has received from many circles, UMAA also stressed that it refers all major matters to the *maraji'* and strives to have contacts with all of them.

UMAA has tried to bring together and unite different Shi'i ethnic and cultural groups under its umbrella. This has inevitably led to clashes and criticisms. In particular, UMMA has been

criticized as there has been no proper gender segregation at its meetings, and because the Islamic dress code has not been properly observed. UMAA is also seen by some as being too liberal in its outlook. UMAA was also chastised for inviting Paul Wolfowitz, from the USA defence department, to speak at its first meeting in Washington, D.C.

UMAA has set many lofty and worthwhile goals. However, whether these ideals will be achieved or not will depend on the level of cooperation it receives and its ability to reach out to the Shi'i community at large.

Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an (TTQ)

TTQ was established in 1978 with the specific aim of publishing and distributing the Qur'an. So far, it has published thirty editions of the Qur'an, which have been sent mainly to non-Muslims through out the world. It also sends literature to bookstores and correctional facilities. Al-Hajj Aunali Khalfan, the director of the institute, also participates in book fairs and exhibitions. TTQ publishes other books related to Qur'an. It also publishes children's book about the Qur'an, stories of various prophets from the Qur'an, and other related books.

To sell his different editions of the Qur'an, Br. Khalfan travels to different countries and participates in book fairs throughout the world. The latest fair that he attended was held in Frankfurt. He also participates in book fairs in London, India, Canadian and several other book fairs in the US including Jail

Expo, American Library Association, etc. He realized while traveling to Europe that the Qur'an is not available in different European languages.

Khalfan states that there has been a dramatic increase in the demand for copies of the Qur'an since 911. He states that before September 2001, TTQ used to publish 80,000 copies per year. Now, TTQ publishes 250,000 copies of the Qur'an. In addition, there is a demand to publish the Qur'an and other literature in different languages. TTQ sends the Qur'an to various countries after having it translated into different languages.

Like other Shi'i *da'wa* institutions, Khalfan complains of a lack of support from the Shi'a community. He further states that there is a need for specialization because too many institutes are engaged in similar activities. He states that it would be better for one publisher to specialize in attending book fairs, another to concentrate on correctional facilities. One institution can cater for inter-faith groups and another can engage in other related activities. Khalfan also adds that, in his experience, Sunnis support his institution more than Shi'is do. There is a great demand from Sunni centers and bookstores for copies of the Qur'an and other genres of literature. Within the past few years, Sunni institutes have been more supportive of his cause. For instance, one Sunni Islamic Center ordered 25,000 copies of the Qur'an. A major Shi'i center in Toronto, Canada, on the other hand, would only buy 1,000 books. This is an important point, for it alludes to the lack of enthusiasm by the Shi'i community regarding outreach activities.

Khalfan has faced a few challenges within the past few years. He explains that although there are numerous books on Islam, outlets do not carry most of them – especially Shi'a Islamic books. They will not stock Islamic books in a manner they stock books on other religions.

Islamic Information Center (IIC)

Islamic Information Center is part of Ja'faria Islamic Center in Maryland, where Sayyed Naqavi is the Imam. However, IIC it is a separate entity which is not a non-profit organization. IIC cannot be non-profit because it gets involved into political arenas such as lobbying for particular candidates.

The Islamic Information Center is a "grass-roots" organization that was established in 2003. It was formed for the purpose of negating stereotypical images about Islam and to present a better image of Islam and Muslims. In addition to the director, the IIC has four active committees, the Public Relations (PR), Publication, Computer/Website (IT), and Media (MR) Committees.

According to the IIC, after the September 11th attacks on this country, there was a need felt for disseminating correct information about Islam. Since there was no center that could sufficiently handle the surge of questions that came from the media and the general public, it was decided to establish the IIC.

The stated goal of the Islamic Information Center is to provide a website and an office where proper information regarding

Islam can be disseminated. The IIC is also in contact with various media groups to educate them on the practices and beliefs of Islam. Through this means, the IIC hopes to correct many of the negative views that have many have regarding Islam.

This organization also focuses on teaching the public about Islam especially through the media. They engage in interfaith dialogue as well as writing articles, interviews, documentaries, etc. on the political and legal dimension of Islam. Sayyed Naqavi says that he tries to "expose the real Islam" to the non-Muslim public. He has tried to educate different political figures, such senators and congressmen.

The IIC also issues a bi-monthly newsletter to meet the dual purpose of educating the readers of Islamic solutions to contemporary issues and appraising friends and well-wishers of IIC's activities. IIC also seeks to establish inter-faith relationships and meetings with schools, churches, hospitals, prisons and synagogues. To date, IIC has published a newsletter, sends representatives on local news channels to speak on issues relating to Islam and disseminated flyers and press releases at Islamic events, gatherings and processions. It also plans to broadcast programs on television and talk shows that will educate non-Muslims about Islam.

According to Sayyid Naqavi, the media is not in itself biased; rather, it is ignorant. He contacts the media whenever they make a mistake in representing Muslims, and he finds them ignorant and "very sorry" about what they had written. He believes Muslims must have a proactive approach in dealing with the political figures

as well as the media. "This type of work has not been done for a long time" Sayyed Naqavi says, so he finds the work difficult... especially after 9/11.

The Aale Muhammad Research Center (AMRC)

The Aale Muhammad Research Center was established in the mid-90s by Musa Raza in Toronto, Canada. The aim of the institute is to propagate Islam in the West. AMRC is quite different from many other tabligh institutes that we have considered in that it holds annual Qur'an and Islamic Art exhibitions in public places in Toronto. The Aale Muhammad is run primarily by Musa Raza who has tirelessly held such exhibitions for a number of years. A number of prominent dignitaries and other politicians are invited at the opening ceremony. The annual exhibition is normally held in the Fall and is open to the public for two weeks. The fact that the exhibition is held in public buildings means that it receives much exposure.

The arts shown at the exhibit have attracted a number of people and created a very favorable image of both the Qur'an and Islam. The institute is also in the process of establishing an Islamic library. The main challenges confronting AMRC are the paucity of funds, lack of support from the Shi'a community, the need for human resources, and a general lack of awareness of the importance of the projects by members of the Shi'i community. Even when he holds events and appeals to the Shi'i community, Musa Raza states that the community neither contributes to nor participates in the activities of the AMRC.

Organization of Islamic Learning (OIL)

OIL came into existence in Toronto, Canada in 1999. Its stated objective is to present Islam in a way that is stimulating and thought provoking, in a manner that encourages learning and in a format that fosters constructive discussion. Hence, it has invited speakers who are deemed to be controversial in other Shi'i forums. For example, it has invited high-profile speakers like Dr. Sachedina, Dr. Ayoub, and Lynda Clarke.

OIL holds lectures primarily during the month of Muharram. However, it also invites speakers at regular intervals during the year. Recently, it has tried to bridge the gap between universities and the community by holding university style academic classes for members of the Toronto community. In addition, OIL has a number of thought-provoking articles on its website, many of which challenge the traditional or classical understanding of Islam.

OIL reflects the need for a different and more vibrant interpretation of Islam. Hence, it has challenged the traditional expression of Islamic beliefs and praxis. The genre of program that OIL holds also indicates a clear division within the Shi'i community, and that the traditional and conservative expression of Islam is challenged by some members of the community who are seeking a fresh or different outlook of Muslim beliefs and practices.

The Qur'an Account, Inc.

Established since 1987, the Qur'an account Inc was initially called the Islamic School System. Its leader is the tireless Dr. Hashim, a retired paediatrician from Iraq. Its *da'wa* focus has been

primarily on correctional facilities. Since the institute's inception, Dr. Hashim has converted 6,336 people to Islam. The institute sends copies of the Qur'an, books, and has published quarterly a Bulletin of Affiliation for 23 years. Inmates, non-Muslims and even Muslims send him requests for copies of Qur'an or Islamic books and he mails them what they need. He has done fundraising to cover the cost of the books and mailing, etc.

The inmates Dr. Hashim is in contact with are both Shi'a and Sunni. He sends them any book they request. He also sends them a bulletin of affiliation every three months (called al-Madhahib). He also sends books to prisons' libraries. Dr. Hashim has a database on his computer, which includes these inmates' name and address. He personally buys the books, and ships them to these inmates.

In addition, Dr. Hashim has written some introductory books that have been sent to various correctional facilities. He concentrates on both Shi'is and Sunnis, although lately he has focussed mainly on Sunnis. Like other proselytes, Dr. Hashim reports that due to the Wahhabi influence in prison, there is now less interaction between Shi'is and Sunnis.

According to Dr. Hashim, since the events of 911, there has been less interest in Islam, as Muslim inmates find it more difficult to endure the taunts and different forms of discrimination. He also states that Muslim inmates are treated more harshly since 911. In addition, in recent times, there have been more altercations between Sunnis and Shi'is in prisons. For Dr. Hashim, the main challenge for his institute is that Shi'ism is not well received due primarily to the Wahhabi influence. He reports that Shi'i inmates are threatened

and marginalized. This corroborates the point made in the survey that Shi'is are targeted and discriminated against by the Wahhabis in the correctional facilities.

Dr. Hashim further complains that most Shi'i centers ignore converts and do not cater for their needs. There is a need for more effective communication with and training of converts. Dr. Hashim is often frustrated by the lack of support from the community and that he has to work on his own. Moreover, he confirms the observation we made above, that there is little or no connection with other institutes like the institutes like TTQ, IHS or BMMAS.

Islamic Research Institute

Islamic Research Institute of New York provides academic courses leading to degrees and certificates in the field of Islamic Studies. The Institute has Bachelors, Masters, and two P.h.D programs. It currently functions from al-Khu'i Center in New York and uses their facilities.

Mawlana Anwar Ali, who runs the institute, explains that there are many challenges they face in their day-to-day work. The first challenge he says is finding qualified English speaking teachers. The second is that there is not much material regarding Islam in English (as compared to Persian or Arabic). Teachers have to study in Persian and Arabic and then translate the material into English. The most important challenge, Mr. Ali explains, is that there are very few students who are willing to commit themselves fully to these programs. For instance, last semester only eight

students graduated. Another challenge, he explains, is to put all the courses online. Soon a bachelors' degree can be obtained online.

Mawlana Anwar Ali explains that today there are more people interested in learning Islam. His vision is that his organization will turn into a fully functional Islamic College. He would like to train teachers who can then go to other universities and colleges to teach Islam.

He has also been performing *da'wa* work in prisons. But since he is very busy with the Islamic Research Institute, he has now stopped visiting correctional facilities. He refers all of the *da'wa* work to al-Khu'i Center.

Bilal Muslim Mission of America's (BMMA)

Established in the mid-1990's in New York, the BMMA now operates from Orlando, Florida. Initially, most of its outreach activities were focused on Trinidad where Ashik Kermali, the BMMA secretary, tried to spread Shi'ism especially during the months of Muharram when the Hosey processions were undertaken in the name of Imam Husayn (AS).

The focus of BMMA's activities is now America. BMMA responds to letters that are received from various correctional facilities. It also sends out books on Islam. BMMA also undertakes different forms of outreach programs including dialogue with non-Muslims and explaining issues regarding Islam to the media.

Shi'i Political Discourse

Unlike the Sunni community, the American Shi'i community has not been politically active. Lack of Shi'i involvement in the American political process can be attributed to the relatively young age of the centers. Most Shi'i centers in America have been established since 1985. Thus, Shi'is have used their limited financial resources to build and consolidate their centers rather than to engage in political activity or make financial contributions to campaigns. Shi'i political inactivity is also explained by the fact that the Shi'is have yet to form nationwide institutions like CAIR, AMC or AMA. Hence, there is no institution that can unite the Shi'i community or address issues that are of political concern. It is only in the past three years that the United Muslim Association of America (UMAA) has been established. However, this nascent organization has yet to formulate any definitive direction for the Shi'i community, nor has it been able to bridge the chasm that has divided different ethnic entities within the community.

Shi'i political aspirations in America have yet to crystallize into a concrete body with a properly formulated political agenda. In the absence of such political institutions, political activism manifests itself in public discourse on moral and social issues that impact the community.

In a few isolated cases, some Shi'is have nominated themselves to run for Congress by seeking votes from local Shi'i and Sunni communities. However, most of these candidates run independently and are not directly supported by any Shi'i institution. In some areas of America, Shi'i political activity has taken the form of establishing eclectic bodies that transcend

sectarian boundaries, cooperating with Sunnis to create a unified and effective challenge for local posts. Shi'i institutions like al-Khu'i Foundation in New York have persuaded their members that their votes and involvement in the political process can make a difference to their lives in America. Thus, some Shi'is cooperate with Sunnis to provide Muslim candidates for school boards, municipal posts, working for the election of Muslim mayors and state legislators. The intent is to get Shi'is to vote for fellow Muslim candidates, planning for an eventual Muslim presence in Congress or the Senate.

Lack of Shi'i political involvement is further discerned from the fact that during the elections in 2000, there was little discussion within the Shi'i centers on any involvement in the Muslim election campaign. Another striking point is that the Shi'is are not represented even within the Muslim organizations that participate in American civic society. Thus, there are no Shi'i representatives in the American Muslim Council, the Council of American Islamic Relations, or in the Islamic Society of North America. For Muslims to collectively make a significant impact in the American political process, they will have to set aside their ethnic, sectarian and nationalistic differences.

Conclusion

The chapter has examined some of the outreach activities of the Shi 'i community in North America. We have argued that the community is introverted, i.e., it is more concentrated at preserving rather than expanding its boundaries.

The chapter has also examined some of the reasons why people choose to convert to Islam despite the negative publicity it has received, especially since 911. In addition, it has examined some of the challenges converts to Islam experience. The surveys quoted indicate that the community has yet to realize the importance and scope of *da'wa* work in North America. The few Shi'i *da'wa* institutions in existence suffer from a lack of proper direction, leadership, and funding. There is also a need for a central body that could direct the outreach activities of all the institutions. This would avoid the duplication of resources.

Shi'is living in North America face the challenge of preserving their youths from the negative effects of North American secular culture. In addition, they are concerned to mitigate the disadvantage of being in a double minority status, i.e., being a minority in North America and a minority within the larger Muslim community. The Shi'is have to also respond to the assiduous attacks from the Wahhabis who continuously discredit Shi'i beliefs and practices.

Appendix

North American Shia Establishments

blue font indicates a need for address confirmation

Arizona

Al-Mahdi Center
1016 S. River Dr.
Tempe, AZ 85281
www.almahdi.net
(480) 557-9699

California

Abbas Tehrani
(714) 588-8383
Fax: 714-770-7181

Ahlul Bayt Mosque
2155 Murchison Ave.
Pomona, CA, 91768

Al-Zahra Islamic Center
8152 Seville Ave.
South Gate, CA, 90280
213-589-3510
Fax: 909-622-2219

Assadiq Foundation
3285 N. Garey Ave

Pomona, CA 91767,

Phone: 909-392-0251.

Fax: 909-392-0295.

Web Site: www.assadiq.org

Email: cityofknowledge@hotmail.com

Contact: Dr. H. Shaikley, hshaikley@aol.com

Fatima Islamic Society

Suite 202

22425 Ventura Blvd.

Woodland Hills, CA, 91364

818-349-3146

fax#: 818-347-5340

High Desert Islamic Center

18927 Bellflower

Adelanto, CA 92301

619-246-8842

Hijrat Foundation

324 S. Diamond Bar Blvd. Suite 137

Diamond Bar, CA 91765.

(909) 860-9940

(909) 772-8787

Fax: (909) 860-9930

Islamia Mosque

42 Dena Plaza

Concord Ave

Concord, CA 94518

Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib Center
10390 Mountain View Lane,
Lakeside, California 92040
Tel: (619) 596-0020;
Fax (619) 596-6161
San Diego Area

Imam Mahdi Association of Marjaeya
1761-C West Romneya Dr.
Anaheim, California
92801 USA

Iman (Iranian Muslim Association of North America)
3376 Motor Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Institute of Islamic Philosophy and Mystical Thought
9010 Tobias Ave. #202, Panorama City, CA 91402
Phone Number: (818)830-0655
Contact: Ali Husain
Contact E-Mail: ali.h.husain@www.csun.edu

Islamic Center of Northern California
1433 Madison Street
Oakland, CA 94601
Phone Number: (415) 522-9591

Islamic Society of Northern California
781 Bolinas Rd.
Fairfax, CA 94930
415-454-6666
Fax: 415-459-5955
Contact: Imam Khorasani
Email: mosqsalam@aol.com

Islamic Center of Beverly Hills
264 South la Cienega Blvd., PMB 1070
Beverly Hills, California 90211
Tel: (310) 859-0404
Fax: (310) 859-1414

Islamic Educational Center Of Orange County
3194 B Airport Loop #B
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
714-432-0060
Fax 714-432-0070
www.iccoc.org

Islamic Education Center of San Diego
8898 Clairemont Mesa Blvd
Suite H
SD, CA 92123
858-292-6260
AlQazwini@aol.com

Ja'faria Islamic Society
7333 Wilcox Avenue

Cudahy, California 90201
Phone Number: (213) 773-8114
Contact: Br. Shiraz Dharas

Masjid-E-al-Ghadeer
448 Archglen Way
San Jose, CA, 95111

Masjid Al-Rasul
11211 S. Central Avenue
LA, CA, 90059
213-566-0341

Muslim Student Union
308 Eshelman Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA, 94709
510-649-3042

Resalat Islamic Education Foundation
P.O. Box 6192
Woodland Hills
CA 91365

Shia Association of Bay Area
2725 South White Road
San Jose California 95148
Phone Number: (408) 238-4109
Contact: Syed Mudassir Ali Shah

Shia Ithna-Asheri Islamic Jamaat of Los Angeles
7925 Serapis Avenue
Pico Rivera, California 90660
P: 562.942.7442 : 562.942.9722
Email: webmaster@lajamaat.org
Contact: G. Khaku

Zainabia Islamic Society
509 College Avenue
Claremont, CA
Phone Number: 909/823-8490
Contact: Sajjad Kazmi
Contact E-Mail: zainabia_la@yahoo.com

Zainabia Islamic Society
P.O. Box 95
Fontana, CA, 92334

Colorado

Imamia Education Society
1125 South Norfolk Street
Aurora, CO 80017
303-782-6944

Iman Center
6850 E. Evan Ave, #301
Denver, CO 80224
(303) 300-4700

Email: imancenter@yahoo.com

Islamic Center of Ahl-Al-Beit
201 S Lowell Blvd
Denver, CO 80219-1935
(303) 936-5855

Connecticut

Islamic Institute of Ahl-albait
82 Somerset Street
West Hartford, CT 06110
Phone Number: (860) 232-8954
Contact: Rifaat Bachir
Contact E-Mail: RBachir@ZipLink.net

Al-Mustafa Foundation
65 Glenbook Rd
2C Stamford
CT 06902, USA
Tel/fax 203-356-9574
Syed Zaheer-ul-Hassan Naqvi
maulanazaheer@aol.com

Florida

Husseini Islamic Center of Florida
Husseini Islamic Centre of FL Inc.
5211 Hester Avenue
Sanford, FL 32773 USA
Tel: (407)320-7001

Fax: (407)862-4473
Tel: (Ans Machine Only) 407-320-7006
Email: hic@husseini-islamic.org

Islamic Education Center of Florida
Box 677671
Orlando, FL 32827

Islamic Jaffaria Association & Madressah
10554 N.W. 132nd Street
Hialeah Gardens, FL 33016 USA
Tel: (305)557-6835
Fax: (305)557-6835

Islamic Education Center of Tampa
6450 Rockpointe Dr.
Tampa Florida 33634
Phone Number: (813) 884-0847
Contact: Hamid Faraji or Dr. Rashid

Georgia

Caravaan-e-Haider
4949 Memorial Dr. #33-46
Stone Mountain, Georgia 30883
Phone Number: (404)298-6213
Contact: Asad Rizvi

Islamic Education Centre
1100 Hope Road
Dunwoody, Atlanta,

Georgia 30350 USA

Jafari Center
562 Doyal Mills Ct.
Stone Mountain, GA, 30083

Sahebozzaman Islamic Center of Atlanta
4853 Old Mountain Park Rd.
Roswell, GA, 30075
Phone_Number: (770) 642-9411
Contact: Seyed Morteza Safavynia

Sahebozzaman Islamic Center of Atlanta
P.O. Box 671001
Marietta, GA, 30066
770-924-9196
Fax: 770-924-9196

Zainabia Youth
1735 Seasons Parkway
Norcross, GA 30093
Phone Number: (770) 449-3055
Contact: Asad A.Rizvi
Contact E-Mail: Zainabia@hotmail.com

Zainabia Islamic Educational Center
1100 Hope Road
Atlanta, GA 30350
Phone Number: (770) 645-5413
Contact: Haider Shirazi/Akbar Zaidi

Contact E-Mail: zainabia@hotmail.com

Idaho

Imam Al Mahdi (AF) Islamic Center
1932 W. State street
Boise, Idaho 83702
Phone Number: 208-364-8455
Contact: Asaad Zangana

Illinois

Al Asr Organization of Chicago
6229 N. Albany Street, Suite # 2,
Chicago, IL 60659
Phone Number: 773-743-2617
Contact: Asif Raza
Contact E-Mail: gaisarabbas14@yahoo.com
URL: http://www.al-asr.com

Baitul ilm
485 South Bartlett Street
Streamwood, Illinois
60107
Shaykh Mukhtar Fyzee
630-790-4989

Islamic Centre of Chicago

6111 W. Addison Street
Chicago, IL 60634 USA
Tel: (773)283-9718

Islamic Education Center
2N121 Goodrich Ave
Glen Ellyn, IL 60139-3371
Phone: (630) 469-5533
Fax: (630) 469-5598
Contact: Maulana Mehboob Mehdi Abidi
Contact Tel: (630) 871-6064
E-mail: Najafi@hotmail.com

Masom
4353 W. Lawrence Ave.
Chicago, IL 60630
Phone: (773) 283-9718
Contact: Mahmood Dhanji
Contact Phone: (773) 685-2588
E-Mail: Info@masom.com
http://www.masom.com

United Muslims of America
One Bloomingdale Place, Suite 718
Bloomingdale, IL 60108 USA
Phone: (708)539-0786
Contact: Raza Haq

Indiana

Islamic Association of Fort Wayne
4431 Folkestone Drive
Fort Wayne, IN 46804 USA
Tel:(260)436-6878
Email: msm@aol.com

Islamic Center of Michigan City
613 GreenTree Dr.
Michigan City, IN, 46360
Tele: 260.879.9667 or
260-879-9476

Kansas

Al-Zahra Center
38557 w. 287th street
Paola, KS 66071
(913) 557-5614.
www.az-zahra.org
information@az-zahra.org

Kentucky

Al-Zahra Islamic Center
Kashif Hyder
7925 Tolls Lane
Louisville, Kentucky 40214
(270) 766-1022

Maryland

Idara-e-Jafria
3140 Spencerville Rd,
Burtonsville, Maryland, 20866
(301) 421-1962
http://www.geol.com/jafri

Imamia Center Inc.
P.O.Box 275
Lanham, MD 20706
Con8tact: W. A. Zaidi,
301-552-2912

Islamic Education Center
7917 Montrose Road
Potomac, MD, 20854
Phone: (301) 340-2070, 340-6584
FAX: (301) 424-5089

Free Muslim Association Inc.
1220 L. Street N.W., Suite # 100-404
Washington, DC 20005 - 4018
Dr. Shaikh Mohammed Baqer
(202) 318-8555

Massachusetts

Imamia Muslim Foundation
25 Frances Circle

Stow, MA, 01775
508-562-5673
Fax: 508-562-5673

Islamic Educational Center
47 Poplar St
Roslindale MA
02131-2505

Islamic Ma'sumeen Center of New England
115 Wood Street
Hopkinton, Massachusetts 01748
Phone Number: (508) 497-3462
Email: islamjafri@aol.com

Michiga

American Islamic Community Center
Imam Jowad al-Ansari
(313) 624-9551
Fax (248) 854 1432
Email: imamjowad@yahoo.com

AhleBait Center
2230 Crumb Rd.
Walled Lake, MI, 48121
313-669-5740

Ansar Imam Mahdi Islamic Educational Services
6345 Schaefer Rd.
Dearborn, MI 48126
Phone Number: 313-508-2966
Ansarimammahdi@aol.com

The Fadak Foundation
7261 Middlepointe Rd.
Dearborn, Michigan 48126
Phone Number: (313) 582-7052
Contact: Kamyar M. Hedayat
Contact E-Mail: khedayat@med.wayne.edu

Goodwill Charitable Organization
P. O. Box 1794
Dearborn, Michigan 48121

Iraqi Islamic Association of America
P.O. Box 7211
Dearborn, MI, 48121

Islamic Center of America
15571 Joy Rd.
Detroit, MI 48228 USA
Tel: (313) 582-7442
Fax#: 313-582-0988
Contact: Sayed Qazwini

Islamic Council of America
7845 Schaefer Rd.
Dearborn, MI, 48126
313-584-4488

Islamic Institute of Knowledge
13200 W. Warren
Dearborn, MI. 48126
313-584-2570
Fax: 313-584-3430

Islamic Institute of Knowledge
6345 Schaefer Rd., Dearborn, Michigan 48126
Phone Number: (313) 584-2570
Contact: Imam Abdl-Latif Berry
Contact E-Mail: islamicinst@starmail.com
URL: www.iiok.com

Islamic Mosque of America
16427 West Warren Ave.
Detroit, MI, 48228
313-582-5000
Fax: 313-582-0515

Islamic House of Wisdom
22575 Ann Arbor Trail
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127
Ph: (313) 359-1221
Fax: (313) 359-1709
Email:ihwisdom@aol.com
http://www.islamichouseofwisdom.com

Kerbalaa Islamic Education Center
15332 W. Warren Ave. (Warren & Greenfield)
Dearborn, MI, 48126

Contact: Sh. Hisham Hussaini
Phone: (313) 584-2077 Fax: (313) 584-2753

Masjid Imam 'Ali
6169 Whiteford Center Road
Lambertville, MI 48144

Mosque of Imam Ali (AS)
6361 Whiteford Center Rd.
Lambertville, MI
Phone Number: (313) 856-8266
Contact: Dr. T. H. Refai

Project of Sponsoring Orphans in Lebanon
Project of Supporting Poor Families in Lebanon Office:
(313) 581-6113
Pager: (313) 840-7783
Fax: (313) 581-1355
Toll Free:(800) 734-3151
Contact Person: Ahmad A. Ghosn

Minnesota

Anjuman-e-Asghari
P.O.Box 29815
Brooklyn Center, MN, 55429
e-mail: office@mnjamat.org
Ph: 763-424-4909

Anjuman-e-Asghari
Anjuman-e-Asghari Centre of Minnesota

4918 63rd Avenue North
Brooklyn Center,
Minnesota 55429 USA
Tel: (612)424-4909
Fax: (612)537-4389

Missouri

Shia Islamic Education Center
5904 Waterman
St. Louis, Missouri 63112
314-727-0352
Contact: Mohammed Shahriary

Nebraska

Guidance (Al-Hedayah) Foundation
P.O. Box 84283, Lincoln NE 68501
Contact: Saeed Talebanfard, Abdul Lateef

New Jersey

Al Huda Foundation
4 Academy Lane
Demarest, NJ, 07627

Ahle Baith Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 1125
Englishtown, NJ, 07726
908-446-0054

Astane-e-Zehra
P.O. Box 932
Englishtown
NJ, 07726
732-446-0554
abfinfo@aol.com
Syed Tilmiz
609-426-8663

Bait-ul-Qaim
337 Conrow Road
Delran, NJ, 08075
Phone: 609-231-0357
Contact: Wilayat Moosvi

Imam-a-Zamana-Foundation of North America
235 Georgia Rd.
Freehold, New 5 Jersey, 07728
Contact: Dr. Moosa Jaffari at (732) 349-5111

Jafria Association of North America
124 3rd Street
Brentwood, NY 11717

Mehfile Shahe-Khorasan
36 Tenafly Road
Englewood, NJ, 07631
Phone: 201-567-6577
Contact: Sultan Karamali

Message of Peace, Inc. (Pyame Aman)
PO Box 390

Bloomfield, NJ 07003-0390
Contact: Hussen Syed or H. Rizvi
Contact E-Mail: hrizvi786@aol.com
Fax number: 973 338-7696

MFI Mosque Project
PO Box 8129, Bridgewater NJ 08807-8129
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Patterson, NJ, 07501
201-742-3020
Fax: 201-742-0721

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Englewood, NJ, 07631
210-567-6577

Muslim Foundation Inc.
35 West Demarest Avenue
Engle Wood, NJ 07631

Muslim Foundation
P.O. Box 340

Bloomfield, NJ, 07003

Muslim Foundation, Inc.
22 Tomar Court
Bloomfield, NJ, 07003-4014
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Shahe Najaf Islamic Center
124 Street
Brentwood NY 11717

Shia Association of North America
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Delran, NJ, 08075-2122
Tel No. (609) 461-2221 or (609) 764-9650
Contact : Vilayeth Moosavi

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Al-Fatemah Islamic Center
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Guilderland, New York 12084-1325

Imam Ali Center
5511 Queens Blvd.
Woodside, NY, 11377
http://www.iiny.org/
(718) 651-5888

Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Center
89-89 Van Wyck Expressway
Jamaica, NY, 11435
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Contact E-mail: Alkhoei@aol.com
http://www.al-khoei.org

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Elmhurst, NY 14228

Islamic Center of Medina
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716-589-7810
Fax: 716-798-5568

Islamic Guidance Center/Ahlul Bayt Library
543 Atlantic Ave.
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718-852-1390

Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Association
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518-869-1492

Jafria Association of North America

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Brentwood, NY 11717
631-491-8555
www.jana.org

Jaffrey Association of N. America
40 Circle Rd.
Mutton Town, NY, 11791

Ja'ffaria Center
25 Sunburst Circle
E. Amhurst, Buffalo
N.Y. 14051

Masoomeen School
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Flushing, NY, 11352
914-428-5239
Fax: 914-428-5239

Masoomeen School of Islamic Education Inc.
57-12 94TH St.
Elmhurst, NY 11373
e-mail: almasoomeen@aol.com
Contact: JAVAID HUSSAIN (631) 423-5301

Shahe Najaf Islamic Center
124 3rd St.
Brentwood, NY, 11717
Phone Number: 516-273-7353
Contact: Istafa Naqvi

Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of NY
48-67 58th Street
Woodside, NY, 11377
Phone: (718) 507-7680
Contact: Secretary

North Carolina

ICJ (Islamic Community of Jacksonville)
206 Henderson Dr.
Jacksonville, North Carolina, 28540
Phone Number: (910) 938-4598
Contact: R . A . Muhammad
Contact E-Mail: i.c.j@usa.net
URL: http://www.angelfire.com/nc/ICJ/index.html

Islam Awareness Organization
P.O. Box 9237
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
27109

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Al-Sadeq Islamic Center
Toledo, OH, 43612
419-474-7175

Al-Sadeq Islamic Education
5222 Pawnee
Toledo, OH, 43613

Jaffery Union of N.E. Ohio
1470 Mancester Rd
Akroon, OH 44483
Phone Number: 330-847-7280
Contact: Dr. Naushad Khimji

Unity Center
10909 Chippewa Road
Brecksville, OH 44141

Oklahoma

Al-Mahdi Foundation
5635 E. 141th St.
Bixby, OK 74008

Oregon

Islamic Center of Portland
4420 S W 110th Ave.
Beaverton, Oregon, 97005
Phone Number: (503) 526-9305
Contact Person: Ali Houdroge
http://www.icop.org/

Qu'ran Foundation
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1257 Siskiyou Blvd.
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Al-Makarim Islamic Foundation
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Email: almakarim72@maktoob.com
www.eriecom.com/Islam2

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Allentown, PA 18103
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Islamic Studies Association
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Millersville University,
Millersville, Pennsylvania, 17551-0302
Phone Number: (717)871-4641
Contact: Umar Abdullah-Johnson

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7420 Brockton Rd.,

Philadelphia, PA, 19151

Phone Number: (215) 871-7656

Contact: Dr. M. Alavi

Contact E-Mail: alavi@voicenet.com

URL: www.mahdieh.org

Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat of Pennsylvania (SIJPA)

Al-Ahad Islamic Center

1500 Ridgeview Drive

Allentown, PA 18104

Phone: (610) 398-1900

Fax: (610) 398-1918

http://sijpa.org

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Al-Zahra Islamic Center

12457 Old Hickory Blvd

Antioch, TN 37013

Tel: 615-584-7793

Email: amzolfaghari@yahoo.com

Contact: Ali Zolfaghari

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Anjuman Haideria

Islamic Education Center - Houston

2313 S. Voss

Houston, Texas, 77089

Phone number: 713-787-5000, 281-584-5706

Contact person: Jafar Nouchedehi

E-mail: jafar@aspentec.com

http://www.iec-houston.org

Anjuman Pasban-e-Aza

P.O. Box 770308

Houston, Texas, 77215-0308

Phone: (713) 952-4384

Contact: Raza Zaidi or Imran Rizvi

Contact E-Mail: rzaidi@aol.com

http://www.pasban-e-aza.com

Islamic Ahlul Bayt Association

Al-Mahdi Center

Box 151231

Austin, TX 78720-2583

512 291-9855

Contact: Sheikh Safdar Razi

Mailing address: 12460 Los Indios Trail

Austin, Texas 78729-7919

Fax#: 512-291-9855

Email: alqaem@msn.com

Website: iaba-austin.org

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P.O.Box 151231

Austin, TX 78715

(512) 291-9855

Contact: Hasnain Yusufali

Contact E-Mail: webmaster@iaba-austin.org

URL: http://www.iaba-austin.org

Phone: (512) 291-9855

Email:alqaem@msn.com

http://www.iaba-austin.org

Islamic Propagation Foundation
6315 Gulfton
Houston, Texas, 77274
Phone Number: (713) 981-4934
Contact: Syed Mohammed Alsuwaij

Institute of Islamic Learning in the
Metroplex (IILM)
2109 West Parker Road
Suite # 220
Plano, TX 75023

Institute of Quran and Ahlulbait A.S. (IQA)
1712 E. Beltline, Carrolton, TX 75006
(972) 242 2202

The Metroplex Organization of Muslims in North America (MOMIN)
1019 Perry Road
Irving, Texas, 75060
Contact Phone - 972-554-0200
www.momin.one

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Ahlul-Bayt Islamic Trust of America
14740 M. Flint Lee Rd.
Chantilly, VA, 20165

703-222-5535

Fax: 703-803-3483

International Islamic Society

P.O. Box 5132

Falls Church, VA, 22044

Fax: 703-237-5467

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7254 Maple Place

Annandale, VA 22003

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Fax: (703) 642-0421

Shaikh Makki Hayeri

arrasool@alshirazi.com

Manassas Mosque

12950 Prayer Ct.

Manassas VA 20109

Ph. (703) 257-5537,

Fax. (703) 361-1716

E-mail: info@manassas-mosque.org

Mohammadia Center of Virginia

P.O. Box 15432

Alexandria, Virginia, 22309

703-256-9326

Contact: Syed Zulfiqar Haider

Contact E-Mail: mohammadia@aol.com

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Ithnasheri Muslim Association of the Northwest (IMAN)

P.O. Box 6544
Bellevue, WA 98008-0544
(206) 202-4626
iman@iman-wa.org

Jaafari Association
1812 223rd Place, N.E.
Redmond, WA, 98053

Zainab (A.S.) Organization of Greater Seattle
PO Box 5196
Lynnwood, WA
98046

American Institutes

Alavi Foundation of New York
500 5th Ave.
34th Floor
New York, NY, 10110

Al-Hadi School of Accelerative Learning
ATTENTION: SECRETARY
2313 S. Voss
Houston, TX
77043

Howza Ilmiyya Jami'a Wali-ul-Asr
P.O. Box 436
Medina, NY, 14103
210-567-5993

Contact: Syed S. Hasan

Imamia Medics International (IMI)
P.O Box 338
45 N. Union Ave.
Lansdowne, PA, 19050-9998
Phone Number: (516) 542-9181
Contact: Sarfaraz Hasni, MD

Islamic Information Center
15601 Indian Ola Dr., Rockville
MD 20855
Syed Naqvi
301-840-3744
email: amaa786@aol.com

Islamic Institute of Theology
933 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia
PA 19123
Contact: Professor Sakhawat Hussain
215-765-8690
Fax 215-765-8691

Islamic Media Center in Southern California
16697 Escalon Dr.
Fontana, CA 92336
USA
(T) 951-662-1010
(fax) 909 – 947-4474

Sh. Falah al-Attar

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529 14th St, NW
499 National Press Building
Washington, DC, 20045
202-737-4742

Islamic Theological Seminary
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414 West Ave.
Medina, NY, 14103
716-589-7810
Fax: 716-798-5709
http://www.tiac.net/users/islam/index1.htm
Comments: Website does not work.

Kufa Center of Islamic Knowledge (KCIK)
AL-Kufa Newsletter, Monthly Message and Reply (email)
P.O. Box 11771
Roanoke, Virginia ,24022-1771
Tel./Fax: (540) 563-8471
E-mail: alkufanewsletter@kufa.org or al_kufa@hotmail.com
http://kufa.org
Contact person: Amer A. AL-Zubaidi

Mohsena Memorial Foundation
P.O. Box 2309
Princeton, NJ, 08543
609-799-2809
Fax: 609-799-7311

Stockton Islamic Library
1223 stratford #8, Stockton, CA 95207
Phone Number: (209) 957-5130
Contact: Mahdi Saleh Hussein

Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an
Publishers and Distributors of Islamic Books
P.O. Box 1115
Corona, Elmhurst Station
Elmhurst, NY 11373-1115
Phone Number: (718) 779-6505
Contact: Br. Aunali Khalfan

Contact E-Mail: ttq@n-site.com
http://koranusa.org

The Open School
P.O. Box 53573
Chicago, IL, 60653
312-324-3449

The Holy Qur'an Institute
7719 Schaefer Rd.
Dearborn, MI 48126
Tel. (313) 582-7566
Imam Mohammad Jawad
imamsalami@yahoo.com

Canadian Institutes

Aale Muhammad Research Center
P.O. Box 397
Station A
Scarborough, ON M1K 5C3 Canada
416-369-9252
Fax: 416-369-9252

Academy for Islamic Learning
7840 Alderbridge Way
#200
Richmond, BC
V6X 2A5
Tel/fax: 604-214-0786
Sh. Hasnain Kassamali
www.academyofislam.org

Islamic Humanitarian Service
81 Hollinger Crescent
Kitchener, ON
N2K 2Y8
Contact: Br. Shafiq Hudda
Phone: (519) 895-1381
Fax: (519) 895-2117

NASIMCO
P.O. Box 76559
Supercenter Postal Outlet
Markham, ON

L3R ON5 Canada

Tayyiba Publishers & Distributors
P O Box 88003
Lansdowne Mall
Richmond B.C. V6X 3T6
Canada
Phone Number: (604)273-4786
Contact: Hasan Ali & Tayyiba
Fax: (604) 279-0786
http://www.al-islam.org/publishers/tayyiba/

Canadian Jamaats

Alberta

Husseini Association
3467 – 46th Avenue S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2H 2H7
403-235-1212

Islamic Shia ITHNA'ASHERI Jamat
of Edmonton
4307-33 Ave.
Edmonton Alberta, Canada
Phone Number: 403 463 4660
http://www.jammat.org/

British Columbia

Az-Zahraa Islamic Center
8580 #5 Rd
Richmond, BC V6Y 2V4
604-279-1535

Al-Kawthar Islamic Association
8550 123 Street
Surrey, BC V3W 3V6

Mahdi Islamic Education Foundation
4-1680 Lloyd Ave,
North Vancouver, BC V7P 2N6

Aza-e-Hussain Association of BC
5240 Turner Street
Richmond, BC V6V 2P8

Canadian Hossaini Association
10644 - 135 Street
Surrey, BC V3T 4C7

Great Prophet Islamic Association
7753 Edmons Street, Burnaby
BC, V3N-1B9
Phone Number: (604) 515-4843
Contact: Abu Husayn
E-mail: Adham@sprint.ca

North Vancouver Masjid

North Vancouver, BC
V7P 1M6 Canada
Shia Muslim Community of British Columbia
3360 Sexsmith Rd.
Richmond, B.C., Canada V6X 2H8
PH# (604) 270-3923, MAJLIS INFO (604) 279-1535

The Lebanese Canadian Cultural House
P O Box 86585
North Vancouver, BC V7L 4L1

Vancouver Muslim Community
A1-6420 Beresford St.
Burnaby, B.C., Canada V5E 1B6
PHONE: (604) 430-2379, MAJLIS INFO (604) 430-0229

Manitoba

Husseini Assoc of Manitoba Inc.
59 Morningside Drive
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 4A2
204-269-6143

Ontario

Afghani Islamic Center
22 Hobson Av.

Toronto ON
M4A 1Y2

Ahlul Bayt Assembly of North America
P.O. Box 76568
Supercenter Postal Outlet
Markham, ON
L3R ON5 Canada

Ahlul-Bayt Centre - Ottawa
2285 Saint Laurent Blvd
Unit 10, Row B
Ottawa Ontario K1G 5A2
Phone Number: (613) 526-1259
Contact: Leave a message and we will call you back

Al-Batool Fatima Association Inc
2575 Bond
Ottawa, ON
K2B7C3

Al-Huda Lebanese Muslim Society
P.O. Box 62030
1448 Lawrence Ave. E
North York, ON M4A 2W1 Canada

Al-Huda Lebanese Muslim Society
10 Codeco Ct.

Don Mills, Ontario M1R 1T1
Phone Number: (416) 446-0935
Contact: Khaled Kefel
Contact E-Mail: Al-Huda@ica.net

Al-Husain Foundation
10992 Kennedy Road
Markham, ON
L6C1P1

Al-Mahdi Comunity Centre
2285 St Laurent Boulevard
Ottawa, ON K1G4Z7

Al Mahdi Youth Society
510 Concession 3 Road
Pickering Ontario L1X 2R4
Phone Number: (905) 837-1572
Contact: Br. Asad Jafri
http://www.majaalis.com/

Almehdi Almuntazar Union
4474 Blakie Road
London, ON
N6L1G6
http://www.jaffari.org/abic/

Babul Ilm Islam[illegible]nter
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5359 Timberlea Blvd., Unit 52,

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url: www.bab-ul-ilm.org

Imam Ali Islamic Centre
120 Bermondsey Road
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M4A1X5

Islamic Museum Toronto
328 Passmore Ave
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Phone Number: 416-754 7906
Contact: Farhat Moosavi

Islamic Shia Ithn'Asheri Community of London
48 Downing Street
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65 Fifth Ave.
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519-748-5853

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Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Association of Ottawa

3856 Richmond Road, Nepean, Ontario, K2H 5C4

Mailing address only: 37 Brady Ave, Kanata Ontario K2K 2R2

Phone Number: (613) 592-8368

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Fax: (613) 567-0731

Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of Toronto

7340 Bayview Ave.

Thornhill, ON, L3T 2R7 Canada

905-881-1763

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Email:: executive@jaffari.org

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Madinatul Ilm

ATTENTION: SECRETARY

120 Bermondsy Road

Toronto, ON

M4A 1X5

Masumeen Islamic Center

7580 Kennedy Road South

Brampton, Ontario, Canada

L6V 3N2

Email: management@masumeen.org

url: http://www.masumeen.org/

Mosque &School of Ehlul-Bayt

1065 Wyandotte East

Windsor, ON

N9A3K

Rezavi Islamic Center

95 Mead Avenue

Hamilton, Ontario L8H 3T6

Phone: 905-664-1788

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Contact: Ramzan Manek

The Council of Islamic Guidance

Al-Mahdi Islamic Center

510 Concession 3 Road

Pickering, Ontario, L1X 2R4

http://www.globalserve.net/~baqri

E-mail : asad@shaw.wave.ca

Quebec

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#412

5460 Sunnybrooke

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514-488-6483

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Fax: 514-489-4806

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QC, H1H 2S4
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Sheikh Mohammed Nadim
www.azzahra.org

Iranian Group
Montreal, PQ, Canada
514-284-6243

Iraqi Community Center
5733 Sherbrook St. W.
Montreal, PQ Canada
514-284-6243

Lebanese Islamic Center

60 Port Royal Rd.
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514-381-6827
Syed Nabil Abbas

Mu'assah Amir Al-Mu'Minin
8219 Central Lasalle
Lasalle, PQ, H8P 3M8 Canada
514-366-1509

Shian-e-Haidery Islamic Association
210 St. Jack
Lachin, QC
H8R 1E2
Canada
Phone: 514-483-6664, or (514) 364-5075
Fax: 450-638-4507
Contact: Imam Sheikh Saleh Seboweh

BISMILLAHI RAHMANI RAHIM
SURVEY OF SHI'A MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THIS SURVEY?

This survey is about the mission, activities, challenges, and plans of Shi'a Muslim organizations in North America. The survey is part of a larger study about the origins and development of Shi'a communities on the North American continent. Your cooperation in completing the survey, therefore, is very critical. **The survey results will be reported in total, and so organizations will not be identified by individual responses, which will be kept strictly confidential.**

Because of the nature of the survey, it is very important that it be completed by a person in the organization who has overall administrative responsibility or resident alim (but only if he/she has overall administrative responsibility).

Name of the Organization_____

_____

Mailing/Street Address_____

_____

Telephone Number_____Fax Number_____

_____

E-mail Address_____

Your Name_____

Your Position_____

1) When was your organization established?_____

2) Your services are currently conducted at

_____a rented facility.

_____a mosque or masjid.

_____an apartment or a house.

_____other (please specify):_____

3) In what year was the facility acquired?_____

_____

4) In what language(s) is/are most of your events conducted?

5) What other languages are employed for any of your events?

1._____

2._____

3._____

6) How many people are registered as members of the organization? Members are identified as persons who attend activities on a fairly regular basis, or who support the institution and its programs in some manner. Please use a specific number or a very limited range (for example, 100-125, rather than 100-500).

Number of persons_____

7) From which country/countries do your members come? (List as many as possible with approximate percentages)

Country % of Membership

_____

_____

8) On the chart below, please carefully indicate: (1) the programs your organization offers, (2) the frequency with which the programs are held, (3) the average number of participants, and (4) your sense for the degree of success of each program.

Use the following keys:

FREQUENCY	**SUCCESS RATING**
D=Daily	
W = Weekly	1 = Not at all Successful
M = Monthly	2 = Moderately successful
O = Occasionally	3 = Very successful
Y = Once a year	

9) From

the following options, list 1-5 the factors contributing most to the success of the programs held at your center. Place a "1" next to the most important factor, a "2" next to the second most important factor, and so on.

_____Importance of the event
_____The location of the event
_____The speaker at the event
_____The publicity of the event
_____Serving dinner at the event
_____The invitation of a guest speaker
_____The regular scheduling of an event (Continuity)
_____Offering English translation
_____Large attendance
_____Offering the program in English
_____Other: Please Specify_____
_____

10) Please use the list below to identify what you believe are the current and future challenges for your organization. Check what you believe to be the top five (5) **CURRENT** challenges, and the top five (5) **FUTURE** challenges. There should be five checks only in each of the two columns.

Current Challenge Future Challenge

_____Acquiring a facility
_____ Adding to the current facility

_____ Achieving regular attendance

_____ Dealing with divisiveness in the community

_____ Obtaining a resident alim

_____ Using English in programs

_____ Transmitting religion to young people

_____ Developing literature for non-Muslims

_____ Working cooperatively with non-Shi'a Muslims in society

_____ Having women involved in the programs

_____ Getting involved in the political process

_____ Maintaining Shi'a values in North America

_____ Increasing membership

_____ Growing in numbers

_____ Responding to the needs of new converts

Other (list):

_____

11) In what way does the organization incorporate into its life women, senior citizens, children and youth? Please mark whether the following descriptions apply to the women, children and youth, and/or seniors of your organization.

Activity	Women	Youth	Seniors
Serve on Board of Directors			
Serve on committees			
Can participate in all events			
Have their own committee within the larger organization.			
Are offered special classes			

Special needs provided			

Please list any specific special events/programs that are arranged to meet the needs of :

Women:

Children/Youth:

Senior Citizens:

12) Do the youth regularly attend the services? If so, what attracts them?

If not, why do they stay away?

13) Please circle one:

When you hold lectures/majalis, women:

a) are seated in a separate room from men

b) are seated in the same room as men with a partition

c) are seated in the same room as men with no partition

d) are do not participate at all

14) In what da'wa/tabligh work is your organization involved?

_____ Interfaith dialogue events

_____ Invitations to events extended to non-Muslims

_____ Lectures on comparative religion offered

_____ Library available to the community

_____ Procession organized on Ashura day

_____ Maulana/speaker requested to talk about other religions

_____ Tabligh efforts undertaken by individual members

_____ Visit non-Muslim centers

_____ Contact made with high school and college students

_____ Contact made with prisoners

_____ Others (list):_____

15) Do members of the Black Muslim Community participate in your services?

Yes ..... No..... If Yes, approximately how many?___

_____

16) What specific strategies does the organization employ in order to maintain its identity? (Check all that apply and add your own to the list.)

_____Our literature identifies us as Shi'a

_____Our building identifies us

_____Our literature interprets the Muslim faith

_____We offer programs that show the teachings of Ahlul Bayt

_____Our children are taught the Shi'a Muslim faith

_____While all are invited to our events, we make sure that the Shi'a beliefs are emphasized

17) Approximately how many Shi'as do you think live in your city (include Shi'as from different parts of the world)?

18) How are your relations with other Shi'a centers in your city?
Poor, Average, Good, Excellent?

19) How are your relations with Sunni centers in your city?
Poor, Average, Good, Excellent?

Conclusion:

The last two questions are open-ended. Please take some time to consider them carefully before responding.

20) What are the MISSIONS of your organization?
"Missions" refers to the reasons for the existence of the organization - the purpose for which it exists. Please feel free to use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

21) What vision does the organization have for the next five years; that is, what does it want to accomplish, and what does it want to grow to be? What are some specific goals? What are the dreams for the organization?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP. WE WILL SHARE THE OVERALL RESULTS WITH YOU!

WASSALAAM

Appendix One

SHI'A MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA – YEARS IN EXISTENCE

No.	Organization.	Year In Existence	Language.
1.	Shia Islamic Education Center	1999	English
2.	I S I A J Kitchener	1984	English. Gujurati. Urdu
3.	Masom Center	1983	English, Urdu
4.	Islamic Humanitarian Service	1991	English
5.	Manassas Mo[illegible]e	2002	Not stated
6.	Islamic Society of Georgia	1984	Not stated
7.	I.S.I. J of Los Angeles	1992	English
8.	IEC Hussaini	1982	Urdu
9.	Muslim Community School	1992	Not stated
10.	Islamic Library & Research Center	2003	Not stated
11.	Sahebozzam Islamic Center of Altanta	2002	Not stated
12.	I.S.I.J of Toronto	1986	English, Urdu
13.	Islamic Humanitarian Society	1992	Not stated
14.	Husaini Association of Manitoba	1991	English
15.	Ahlul Bait Assembly of N. America	Not stated	English. Farsi
16.	Tahrika Tarsile Quran Inc.	1986	Not stated
17.	Islamic Center of Portland	Not stated	Not stated
18.	Imam Al Khoei Islamic Center	Not stated	Not stated
19.	Imam-e-Zamana Found. N. America	1996	Not stated
20.	Islamic Center Anjuman-e Asgheri	1990	Not stated

21. Islamic Center of N. America	Not stated	Not stated
22. Islamic Center of Beverly Hills	1999	English
23. Islamic Masum`n Cent/Imamia Islm Fnd.	2000	Not stated
24. Islamic Institute of Knowledge	Not stated	Not stated
25. Islamic Institute of New York	2003	Not stated
26. I.S.I.A Association of Ottawa	Not stated	Not stated
27. Islamic Education Center	1989	Not stated
28. Idara E Jafcria	Not stated	Not stated
29. Azzahra International Foundation	Not stated	Not stated
30. Ale Muhammad Research Center	Not stated	Not stated
31. Islamic Society of Ma`un	1995	Not stated
32. Bani Hashim Society	1988	Urdu, English
33. Islamic Education Center Inc.	1990	Farsi, Arabic, English
34. Al Mahdi Islamic Center	1993	Urdu, English
35. Shi`a Islamic Union of London	Not stated	Not stated
36. Islamic House of Wisdom	2002	English, Arabic
37. Momin Metroplex Org. of Musl. Texas	Not stated	Not stated
38. Moslem Group	Not stated	English, Arabic
39. Mohammadia Islamic Association	1997	Not stated
40. Islamic Center of Michigan City	1979	English, Arabic
41.Islamic Association of Fort Wayne	1994	English
42. Islamic Cultural Cent. Of N. California	2003	Farsi, English
43. Almakarim Islamic Foundation	1999	English/Arabic
44. Al-Zahra Islamic Center	1999	Persian/Arabic
45. Anjuman-e-Asghari	1989	English/Urdu/Farsi/Arabic

46	Astaane-e-Zahara	1990	Urdu/English
47	Imamic Education Society	1998	English/Urdu/Farsi/Arabic
48	Islamic Center of Ahlulbeit	?	English/Arabic/Farsi
49	Islamic Center of Medina	1980's	English/Urdu
50	Islamic Center of Portland	1991	English
51	Islamic Edu Center of Orange County	1999	English/Farsi/Arabic
52.	Islamic Educational Center of SD	1994	Arabic/Farsi/English
53.	Jafria Association of North America	1995	Urdu/English/Farsi
54.	Manassas Masjid	1994	English/Urdu/Arabic/ Farsi
55.	Shia Islamic Education Center	1998	Farsi/English
56.	Husaini Association of Manitoba Inc	?	English/Urdu/Persian
57.	Al Mehdi Benevolent Fond. Of Arizona	2003	English/Arabic/Urdu/Farsi

SUMMARY;

57 Organizations - 1979 =1
1980=1
1982=1
1983=1
1984=2
1986=2
1988=1
1989=2
1990=3
1991=3
1992=3
1993=1
1994=3
1995=2
1996=1
1997=1
1998=2

Years of Existence per decade	**%**
1970's	1.5
1980's	17.4
1990's	42.1
2000's	14.7
Unknown	24.6

1999=5

2000=2

2002=3

2003=3

Not stated=14

57 Organizations - 31 = English (54.8%)

14 = Farsi/Persian (24.8%)

13 = Arabic (22.7%)

14 = Urdu (24.8%)

2 = Gujurati (3.7%)

24 = Not stated (42.1%)

Appendix Two

Figure 1

MEMBERSHIP & CONSTITUENT COUNTRIES OF SHI'A ORGANIZATIONS

Registered Shi'a Members in North American Organizations (15)

No.	Constituent Country.	Members	%
1.	Iraqi	219	5.7
2.	Irani	1640	43.8
3.	East African	178	4.6
4.	Indo-Pakistani	1021	26.5
5.	Other Arabs	541	14.5
6.	N. /S. American	39	1.0
7.	Unclassified by Adm.	150	3.9
	TOTAL	**3788**	**100**

Note; Registered members are identified as persons who attend activities on a fairly regular basis or who support the institution and its programs in some manner.

Figure 2

REGISTERED SHI'A MEMBERS IN NORTH AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS (57)

No.	Constituent Country.	No. Of Organizations	%
1.	Iraqi	13	22.7
2.	Irani	18	31.8
3.	East African	7	12.3
4.	Indo-Pakistani	17	27.8
5.	Other Arabs	17	27.8
6.	N. /S. American	5	8.8
7.	Unclassified by Adm. (u)	32	56.1

Total Registered Members = 23,408 +10u

Note; Registered members are identified as persons who attend activities on a fairly regular basis or who support the institution and its programs in some manner.

Appendix Three

Figure 1

FREQUENCY OF PROGRAMS & PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Program	Yes	U	
Frequency	# Participating		
Imam's Birthday/Wafaat	14	1	o=5,m=6,y=3,n=1
1717			
Day Islamic School	3	12	d=1,w=1,u=1
18+u			
Du'aa Kumayl	14	1	w=11,o=2,u=1
687+u			
Ghadeer Celebrations	15	0	y=13, u=2
1839+u			
Interfaith Dialogue	8	7	y=1,o=5,q=1,m=1
407+2u			
Juma'a Salat	11	4	w=8,o=1, u=2
457+u			
Language Classes	4	11	w=2, u=2
48+u			
Madresah/Weekend School	11	4	w=8, u=3
582+2u			
Thursday/Friday Majlis	7	8	w=5,u=2
490+u			
Muharram Programs	14	1	y=9,u=4,d=1
2115+4u			

Qura'an Studies/Tafsir	11	4	w=7,u=2,o=1,m=1
283+4u			
Ramadhan Program	15	0	d=13,u=1, 8nights=1
1390+4u			
Solemnizing Marriages	1	14	as needed
15u			
Funeral Services	2	13	as needed
40+13u			
Open House	1	14	y=1
300+14u			
Family Summer Camp	1	14	y=1
150+14u			

Key;

O= occasionally

M=monthly

Y=yearly

N=never

D=daily

W=weekly

U=unknown

Q=quarterly

Figure 2

GENRES OF PROGRAMS HELD

Program	**Yes**	**Not known (u)**
# Participating		
Imam's Birthday/Wafaat	38 (66.8%)	19(33.2%)
5020+18u		

Day Islamic School 168+42u	4 (7.7%)	53 (92.3%)
Du'aa Kumayl 1622+22u	35 (61.1%)	22(38.9%)
Ghadeer Celebrations 6612+23u	35 (61.1%)	22(38.9%)
Interfaith Dialogue 407+ 43u	9 (15.8%)	48(84.2%)
Juma'a Salat 1427+32u	22 (38.8%)	35(61,2%)
Language Classes 148+40u	7 (12.8%)	50(87.2%)
Madresah/Weekend School 3600+21u	34 (59.7%)	23(40.3%)
Thursday/Friday Majlis 1110+38u	12 (21.8%)	45(78.2%)
Muharram Programs 15665+21u	39 (68.1%)	18(31.9%)
Qura'an Studies/Tafsir 323+35u	22 (38.8%)	35(61.2%)
Ramadhan Program 9810+23u	38 (66.8%)	19(33.2%)
Solemnizing Marriages 57u	6 (10.7%)	51(89.3%)
Funeral Services 57u	3 (5.3%)	54(94.7%)
Open House 300+55u	2 (3.7%)	55(96.3%)
Family Summer Camp 150+54u	3 (5.3%)	54(94.7%)

Conversions	1(1.8%)	56(98.2%)
57u		
News letters	4 (7.7%)	53 (92.3%)
700+53u		
Library	5 (8.8%)	52(91.2%)
100+52u		
Welfare assistance	1 (1.8%)	56(98.2%)
90+56u		
Adult education	2 (3.7%)	55(96.3%)
10+55u		
Correspondence bro/sis prison	1 (1.8%)	56(98.2%)
57u		

Appendix Four

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF PROGRAMS HELD AT SHI'A CENTERS

Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Factors					
Importance of event	11	1	0	1	1
The location of event	3	3	2	1	1
The speaker at the event	5	5	5	1	0
The publicity at the event	0	2	3	1	3
Serving dinner at the event	2	2	3	3	2
The invitation of a guest speaker		0	2	1	3
0					
Regular scheduling of an event (Continuity)	1	0	2	0	
1					
Offering English Translation		1	0	0	0
1					
Large Attendance		1	3	0	1
1					
Offering the Program in English		0	0	0	0
0					
Style of Program Open discussion		1	1	1	2
3					
Diligence		0	1	0	0
0					
Social Atmosphere		0	1	0	0
0					
Dedication of Members		1	0	0	0
0					
Credibility of Organization		0	0	0	1
0					

Unknown	31	36	40	43	44
Total	57	57	57	57	57

Conclusion

1) Unknown (55%)
2) Importance of event (20%)
3) The speaker at the event (9%)
4) Location of the event (5%)
5) Serving dinner at the event (4%)

Appendix Five

Figure 1

CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES OF SHI'A ORGANIZATIONS

CURRENT

Rank	1	2	3	4	5
Challenge					
Acquiring a facility	5	0	0	0	0
Adding to current facility	5	3	0	0	1

Achieving/maintaining financial stability				9	7
0	0	1			
Achieving regular attendance				4	4
3	0	1			
Dealing with divisiveness in the community				2	2
5	2	0			
Obtaining a resident alim				2	1
3	0	1			
Using English in programs				1	0
1	1	0			
Transmitting religion to young people				0	1
4	3	1			
Developing literature for non-muslims				0	1
0	1	0			
Working cooperatively with non-Shia Muslims in society				0	0
0	0	1			
Having women involved in programs				0	0
0	1	0			
Getting involved in political process				0	0
0	2	0			
Maintaining Shi'a values in North America				0	0
0	3	4			
Increasing membership				0	0
0	1	3			
Growing in numbers				0	0
1	0	1			
Responding to the needs of new converts				0	0
0	0	0			
Increasing members involvement				0	0
2	1	1			

Communication with other Shi'a groups					0	0	
0	0	0					
Members Economic Upliftment					0	1	
0	0	0					
Eradicate Jealousy					0	2	
0	0	0					
Not being included in Shura					1	0	
0	0	0					
Unknown					28	35	
38	42	42					
Total				57	57	57	
57	57						

Conclusion;

1) Unknown (49%)
2) Achieving/maintaining financial stability (16%)
3) Adding to current facility (9%)
4) Acquiring a facility (9%)
5) Achieving regular attendance (8%)

Figure 2

FUTURE

Rank				1	2	3	
4	5						
Challenge							
Acquiring a facility					5	0	
0	0	0					

Adding to current facility	1	2	0	0	1	
Achieving maintaining financial stability	4	1	2	0	0	
Achieving regular attendance	0	3	2	0	1	
Dealing with divisiveness in the community	1	0	0	0	0	
Obtaining a resident alim (Bilingual)	3	4	3	2	0	
Using English in programs	2	0	1	0	2	
Transmitting religion to young people	3	2	4	3	1	
Developing literature for non-Muslims	0	2	2	1	0	
Working cooperatively with non-Shia Muslims in society	0	0	0	4	0	
Having women involved in programs	0	0	1	0	1	
Getting involved in political process	0	0	0	0	2	
Maintaining Shi'a values in North America	0	1	0	1	2	
Increasing membership	0	0	0	2	1	
Growing in numbers	0	0	1	0	0	
Responding to the needs of new converts	1	0	0	0	1	

Increasing members involvement				1	1	
0	0	0				
Developing religious activities				0	1	
0	0	0				
Involvement of youth				2	0	
0	1	0				
Adult education				0	1	
0	0	0				
Maintaining Muslim identity				1	0	
0	0	0				
Teaching languages (Arabic, Urdu)				1	0	
0	0	0				
Registration as an Official Shi'a Center				1	0	
0	0	0				
Meeting Organizational Goals				1	0	
0	0	0				
Marriage counseling				0	0	
0	0	1				
Unknown				30	39	
41	43	44				
Total			57	57	57	
57	57					

Conclusion;

1) Unknown (53%)
2) Acquiring a facility (9%)
3) Achieving/maintaining financial stability (8%)
4) Obtaining a resident alim (Bilingual) (5%)
5) Transmitting religion to young people (5%)

Appendix Six

INCORPORATION OF WOMEN, SENIOR CITIZENS, CHILDREN AND YOUTHS IN CENTERS

Activity of 57 Organizations	*Women*	*Children/Youth*	*Seniors*
Serve on board of director's	***12 (22%)***	***4 (8%)***	***7 (13%)***
Serve on committees	***16 (29%)***	***11 (19%)***	***8 (15%)***
Can participate in all events	***15 (28%)***	***18 (32%)***	***12 (22%)***
Have their own committee/groups	***16 (29%)***	***12 (22%)***	***1 (2%)***
Are offered special classes	***1 (2%)***	***24 (42%)***	***u (?)***
Have special need provided for	***6 (11%)***	***20 (37%)***	***4 (8%)***

Appendix Seven

SEATING OF WOMEN IN CENTERS

Seating Arrangements for women during lectures

No. of organizations

Seated in separate room

6 (43%)

Seated in the same room as men with a partition

5 (35%)

Seated in the same room as men with no partition

3 (22%)

Do not participate at all

0 (0%)

Appendix Eight

Participation by Members of the African-American Community

No. of organizations	*Yes*	*No*	*Not known*	*Total Participation*
15 (100%)	8 (54%)	7 (46%)	0	28 Persons

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey One

Religion before converted to Islam	Number
1) None	3 (37.5%)
2) Judaism	0 (0%)
3) Christianity – Baptist	4 (50%)
4) Christianity – Roman Catholic	1 (12.5%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey Two

Details of converted to Islam

Year	Number
1976	1 (12.5%)
1980	**1 (12.5%)**
1983	2 (25%)
1985	1 (12.5%)
1986	1 (12.5%)
1990	2 (25%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

Age (years)	Number
15	1 (12.5%)
16	1 (12.5%)
18	1 (12.5%)
20	1 (12.5%)
23	1 (12.5%)
27	1 (12.5%)
28	1 (12.5%)
31	1 (12.5%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

Conversion took place	**Number**

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey One

Religion before converted to Islam	Number
1) None	3 (37.5%)
2) Judaism	0 (0%)
3) Christianity – Baptist	4 (50%)
4) Christianity – Roman Catholic	1 (12.5%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey Two

Details of converted to Islam

Year	Number
1976	1 (12.5%)
1980	**1 (12.5%)**
1983	2 (25%)
1985	1 (12.5%)
1986	1 (12.5%)
1990	2 (25%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

Age (years)	Number
15	1 (12.5%)
16	1 (12.5%)
18	1 (12.5%)
20	1 (12.5%)
23	1 (12.5%)
27	1 (12.5%)
28	1 (12.5%)
31	1 (12.5%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

Conversion took place	**Number**

1) Before incarcerated	3 (37.5%)
2) After incarcerated	5 (62.5%)
TOTAL	**8 (100%)**

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 3

First exposure to Islam

Number

A relative, friend or associate introduced me

6 (75%)

An Imam, aalim or Muslim scholar introduced me.

1 (12.5%)

I read a book or an article in a magazine/newspaper about Islam.

3 (37.5%)

I went to a Mosque.

1 (12.5%)

I went to a lecture/seminar about Islam.

2 (25%)

I learned about a famous person who had converted to Islam.

2 (25%)

I married a Muslim.

0 (0%)

Other – Specify: Autobiography of Malcom X

1 (12.5%)

Note; Some had multiple exposures to Islam.

Serious interest in converting to Islam	Number
Immediately after being exposed to Islam	5 962.5%)
After a serious study of Islam	3 (37.5%)
TOTAL	8 (100%)

Initial group before conversion

Number

Ansaar Allah

0 (0%)

Nation of Islam

0 (0%)

Shi'ism

1 12.5%)

Sunni Muslim

6 (75%)

Wahaabis

0 (0%)

Other – Specify: Just Muslim

1 (12.5%)

TOTAL

8 (100%)

Did you have any concerns or reservations about converting to Islam?

Yes

1 (12.5%)

No

7 (87.5%)

TOTAL

8 (100%)

If yes, what concern/reservation?

Islam's principle and precepts

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 4

Most important reasons for conversion to Islam

	Number
Thought/Believed it was the right religion (25%)	2
People in prison respected Muslims (12.5%)	1
Muslims are united and smarter (62.5%)	5
Prayers (12.5%)	1
At first glance Islam was odd and it stood out (12.5%)	1
History/Research (12.5%)	1
Not applicable/Unknown (37.5%)	3
Islamic revolution in Iran and struggle in Lebanon (12.5%)	1

Shari'a/ Islamic law (12.5%)	1
Knowledge of/Needed Allah (SWT) in life (37.5%)	3
To change my life (12.5%)	1
I had no "TRUE" religion (12.5%)	1
Read about Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H) (12.5%)	1
Doctrine of Tawheed (12.5%)	1
Practical principles (12.5%)	1

Three most important reasons;

1) Muslims are united and smarter - 5 (62.5%)
2) Knowledge of/needed Allah (SWT) in life – 3 (37.5%)
3) Not applicable/Unknown – 3 (37.5%)

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 5

What year did u become a Shi'a Muslim?

	Number
1984	1
(12.5%)	
1985	1
(12.5%)	
1986	1
(12.5%)	
1990	
1(12.5%)	
1993	
1(12.5%)	
1994	
1(12.5%)	
1996	2
(25%)	
TOTAL	8
(100%)	

How were you converted to Shi'ism?

Number

***As a result of my own study**

4(50%)

***As a result of someone else's persuasion**

2 (25%)

(Specify the person)

1) Friend = 1

2) Muslim brother =1

*As a result of 2

(25%)

1) Not being able to prove what I was practicing as right.

2) Sunni material disrespecting Shi'ism and I had to find out why?

TOTAL

8(100%)

Three questions or concerns you had prior to conversion to Shi'ism that Shi'ism helped resolve?

Questions or concerns **Number of inmates out of 8**

Why do Shia pray with hands down?

1(12.5%)

Imamate and being Ma'sum

7(87.5%)

Confused about 12th Imam (as)
1(12.5%)

Ayats in Qur'an speaking about Ahlul bait
1(12.5%)

Why Sunni's disrespected everyone but Sunni's
1(12.5%)

Access to higher knowledge provided by Shi'ism
1(12.5%)

Why Muslims in Palestine blow up themselves
1(12.5%)

Not applicable/ Unknown
5(62.5%)

Islamic revolution of Iran
1(12.5%)

Jihad
1(12.5%)

Love for Allah (SWT)
1(12.5%)

History of Islam 2
(25%)

Why other brothers were not defending Islam and the rights 1(12.5%)

Summary

Imamate and being Ma'sum = 7(87.5%)

Not applicable/ Unknown = 5 (62.5%)

History of Islam = 2 (25%)

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 6

Did you have any concerns or reservations about converting to Shi'ism?

	Number
Yes	3(37.5%)

For yes, what concerns or reservations?

1) Wasn't sure in the beginning so at times prayed with hands folded and at times hands by side

2) Wasn't sure if my family would understand the change.

3) I was the only Shia and felt out of place

No	4(50%)
Unknown	1(12.5%)
TOTAL	8
(100%)	

Have you experienced any difficulty as a Shi'a Muslim?

Number

Yes

8 (100%)

No

0 (0%)

TOTAL 8

(100%)

If yes, are the difficulties

The same as those experienced as a non Shi'a Muslim?

1(12.5%)

Different than those you experienced as a non Shi'a Muslim?

7(87.5%)

I have never been a non-Shi'a Muslim, so I cannot compare

0 (0%)

List difficulties you have encountered as a Shi'a

Number

Denied right of being a Muslim by non Shi'a brothers

7 (87.5%)

(e.g. cant vote for a leader, Cant hold positions in mosque's)

No access to Shi'a learning materials

2 (25%)

Unknown

1(12.5%)

Sunni brothers turning their backs in times of difficulty

3(37.5%)

To non-Muslims Shi's is a stereo type of 'suicidal terrorist'

1(12.5%)

Accused of trying to assassinate a Sunni Amir.

1(12.5%)

Survey 7

Three most important needs that the institution you are incarcerated in should provide

Top 3 Important Needs	1	2	3
Allow time to offer obligatory prayers	2 (25%)	0(0%)	(0%)
Provide a proper place to offer obligatory prayers	0 (0%)	3(37.5%)	(0%)
Provide food that meets dietary laws	1 (12.5%)	0(0%)	(25%)
Provide special meal times during Ramadan	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Provide access to books on Shi'ism	2 (25%)	1(12.5%)	1(12.5%)
Provide access to Shi'a Imam, alim or Scholar	2(25%)	3(37.5%)	0(0%)
Provide facilities in which to hold classes on Shi'ism	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	4 (50%)

Provide protection against other Muslims 0 (0%) 1
(0%) (12.5%)

Others- Recognition as a religious group 1 (12.5%)
0(0%) 0(0%)

TOTAL **8 (100%) 8**
(100%) 8(100%)

Summary

1) Provide access to Shi'a Imam, alim or Scholar 2(25%)
3(37.5%) 0(0%)

2) Provide access to books on Shi'ism 2 (25%)
1(12.5%) 1(12.5%)

3) Allow time to offer obligatory prayers 2(25%)
0(0%) 0(0%)

Note:

For all the above needs, the Institutions do not permit them at all except for one that permits but does not provide facilities to hold classes on Shi`ism.

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 8

List of unfair treatment and discrimination because of being Shi'a

Number

I have been physically assaulted by staff people because I am Shi'a 0
(0%)

Staff people have verbally assaulted me because I am Shi'a 3
(37.5%)

Sunnis have physically assaulted me because I am Shi'a
1(12.5%)

Sunnis have verbally assaulted me because I am Shi'a 7
(87.5%)

Non-Muslim inmates have physically or verbally assaulted me
because I am Shi'a 0
(0%)

Sunni inmates have attempted to convince me that Shi'ism
is wrong 6
(75%)

Only Sunnis are appointed, as Chaplin's and they do not support
Shi'ism 7
(87.5%)

Only Sunni books are put in the library 6
(75%)

The staff refuses to recognize that Shi`as have different beliefs & practices from Sunnis 8
(100%)

I and other Shi`as are not allowed to observe our own practices, despite complaints to prison officials 7 (87.5%)

Other form of unfair treatment- complains & letters go by unaddressed & unanswered 1 (12.5%)

I have not received unfair treatment or been discriminated against as a Shi`a 0 (0%)

Since incarceration, have you made a conscious effort to

Number

Discuss Shi'ism with other Shi'a inmates 8
(100%)

Discuss Shi'ism with Sunni inmates 8
(100%)

Discuss Shi'is with non-Muslims
6 (75%)

What response have you received?

Shi'a – Shi'a – Try to understand the fundamentals better

Shi'a – Sunni – Debates turn to arguments, moderate opposition, refuse to broaden horizons.

Shi'a – Non Muslim – Ask to know difference between Shi'a and Sunni

Have prison officials/guards forbidden you to discuss Shi'ism?

Number

Yes
0(0%)

No
7(87.5%)

Unknown
1(12.5%)

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 9

When released from your institution do you think Shi'ism will better enable you live in society?

Answer	**Number**
Yes	8(100%)
No	0(0%)

For Yes, explain how?

Has taught me life is a struggle

Given realistic view of life, people and society

I will try to convert my family.

How can the Shi'a community outside prison assist you during your incarceration?

Answer

Number

Help us get our rights to practice our religion

4(50%)

Maintain communication

4(50%)

Establish correspondence

2(25%)

Pray for us

1(12.5%)

Create a means of communication with the mujtahid

1(12.5%)

Visit us

1(12.5%)

Provide Literature

4(50%)

Write letter of advocacy

2(25%)

Have you tried to contact other members of Shi's community during incarceration?

Answer

Number

Yes

4(50%)

No

3(37.5%)

Unknown

1(12.5%)

If yes what responses have you received?

Helpful but we lack communication with people in our communities who are able to help us

Answers as to how shariah is maintained in USA are not responded to.

How to join the ummah upon release from prison is not responded to.

Positive response books have been sent from Trinidad, Iran and Lebanon.

SURVEY OF SHI'A CONVERTS IN PRISON

Survey 10

How can the Shi'a community assist you after your release?

Number

Consider me Muslim not ex-con

1 (12.5%)

Support my religious endeavors

2 (25%)

Allow me to participate in the community

2 (25%)

Help find residence and work

2 (25%)

Create a 120day release program to assist Shi's prisoners and after that we can repay the ummah

1 (12.5%)

Marry a Muslim wife.

1 (12.5%)

Unknown

1 (12.5%)

In what way would like to help the cause of the Shi'a community?

	Number
Write for the community paper (12.5%)	1
Teach about my experience as a Shi'a Muslim in USA prison (25%)	2
Spread the teaching of Islam (25%)	2
Teach those still in prison to struggle (12.5%)	1
Participate in community activities (12.5%)	1
Unknown (12.5%)	1

SURVEY RESULTS OF SHI'A CONVERTS

(In this survey, there are 15 participants who live throughout the United States and Canada. There are certain questions in which more than one answer was given. Thus when tabulated, some questions appear to have had more than 15 participants.)

1. Before you converted to Islam, with what religion were you associated?

_____None
__1__Judaism
__14__Christianity
_____Other

If Christianity, please state which denomination:

Baptist (2)
Southern Baptist (2)
Church of England (1)
Roman Catholic (3)
United Methodist (1)
Lutheran (1)
Non Denominational (1)
Protestant (1)

Christian Apostolic (1) Episcopalian (1)

2. During what year did you convert to Islam and how old were you when you converted?

1971 –15 years old
1975 – 23 years old
1977 - 30 years old
1978 - 20 years old
1979 – 20 years old
1979 – 26 years old
1980 – 21 years old
1980 – 25 years old
1982 – 19 years old
1982 - 22 years old
1983 –23 years old
1984 – 32 years old
1987 –22 years old
1996 –24 years old
2002 –39 years old

3. Did you marry a Muslim before you converted? **No** 8 **Yes** 7

4. How were you first exposed to Islam? (check as many as apply)

10 A relative, friend or associate introduced me.

__5____I read a book or an article in a magazine/news-

paper about Islam.

__1____ An imam, aalim or Muslim scholar introduced.

__1____I went to a mosque.

__1____I went to a lecture/seminar about Islam.

__1____I married a Muslim.

__0___ I learned about a famous person who had

Converted to Islam

___2___*Other

*Specify:

Went into interfaith meeting as a Christian and came out being a Muslim.

Islamic Revolution of Iran.

5. When did you become **seriously** interested in converting to Islam?

____12__Immediately after being exposed to it

_____3_After a serious study of Islam

6. To which group did you convert initially?

__13__ Shiism

__1__ Sunni Muslim√

_____ Ansaar Allah

__1__ Nation of Islam

_____ Wahaabi

_____ Other

7. Did you have any concerns or reservations about converting to Islam?

__12__ Yes

__3__ No

If you checked "Yes," what concerns or reservations did you have?

__4__ Rejection or distance of non-Muslim family

__3__ Hijab

__2__ Discrimination in society/workplace

__2__ Difficulty in understanding some Islamic laws

__2__ Being able to abide by Islamic rules

__1__ Equity of women in Islam

__1__ Difficulty accepting that the religion you have adhered to all of your life is wrong

__1__ Non-deity of Christ

__1__ Fair treatment within Muslim community because of being older, single Muslimah

__1__ The nationalism and racism of the Nation of Islam

8. Please write down the three (3) most important reasons you converted to Islam.

___8___ Tawheed as opposed to Trinity

___3___ Way of prayer and worship

___2___ Political aspect of Islam

___2___ Structure in Islam

___2___ Respect for and equity of women in Islam

___2___ Fear of going to hell

___2___ I knew it was the truth

___2___ Brotherhood in Islam

Other *(Each of the following had one response)*

√ To please God

√ *Adl*

√ Islamic Revolution in Iran

√ Qiyamat

√ No "original sin" concept

√ Salvation

√ Imamat

√ Enjoyment felt in being a Muslim

√ After reading the Qur'an

√ Empowerment of the *mustazafeen*

√ Character of Imam Khomeini

√ Easier when a couple shares a religion & Islam seemed to be the most logical religion

√ Each person being responsible for his/her own acts

9. In which year did you become a **Shi'a** Muslim?

1977 - 1	1983 - 1
1978 - 1	1987 - 1
1979 - 3	1996 - 1
1980 - 2	2002 - 1
1982 - 3	2003 - 1

10. What made you convert to Shiism? (check one)

___8_____As a result of my own study

__ 7____ As a result of someone else's persuasion

11. What are three questions or concerns you had prior to your conversion to Shiism that Shiism helped to resolve? (6 participants did not respond)

___3_____ Why the differences in beliefs and thinking between the two fiqhs Shia & Sunni)

___2___ Continuity of leadership after Prophet

____1____ Why we have sects in Islam?

____1____ Adl of Allah

____1____ Precise practice of Islam without inconsistency

____1____ Knowledge of Ahkam and Fiqh

1 No sectarian bigotry or cultural arrogance and how to detach from these obstacles

1 Discrepancy between Islamic aklagh and some of the acts of the first 3 caliphs.

12. Did you have any concerns or reservations about converting to Shiism?

11 Yes

4 No

If you checked "Yes," what concerns or reservations did you have?

My husband is Sunni and I was concerned that this could cause problems in our relationship.

I had become Shia but the study group I was involved in was Sunni.

Most important was to practice the 'truth' in an Islamic context without the cultural baggage and sectarian bias depicted in many immigrant Muslims practice of Islam.
Needing to and understanding how to inculcate my love of the Ahle Bait as integral to my personality without being sectarian or damning all other Muslims to hell for their practice of what they understood as the truth.

13. Have you experienced any difficulties as a Shi'a Muslim?

(7 participants did not respond to this question)

____5____ **Yes** ____3____ **No**

(4 participants did not respond)

____4____ the same as those you experience as a non-Shi'a Muslim?

____2____ different than those you experienced as a non-Shi's Muslim?

____5____ I have never been a non-Shi'a Muslim, so I cannot compare.

14. List the difficulties you have encountered as a Shi'a. (To each of the following, there was one respondent per statement, except for the first answer)

_3_ Being shunned & made fun of or cursed because of hijab

√ The automatic assumption that I can't speak English well because of hijab

√ Prejudice because of anti-Islamic-Muslim propaganda

√ Expectation of a cold or reserved reception the first time a non-Muslim.

√ Chronic in-fighting at the masjid

√ General lack of leadership locally and globally

√ Sunnis providing most classes and their preoccupation with "Aisha hadiths".

√ Sunni attitude of being right

√ Being a minority within a minority in America and part of the "radical" minority

√ Sunnis less strict with dietary requirement, easier to fit in to regular American society

√ Sunni attitude towards hijab and music more relaxed

√ Some brothers saying it's their right to have as many "seeghehs" (mutah) as they want and discussing this issue very freely with the sisters.

√ Discrimination from other Muslims against Shias

√ I have been spat on and cursed by a Sunni Muslim man at the university on stating I follow the Shia fiqh

√ Sunni misconceptions of shia creed

√ Denied jobs because of hijab, never openly stated, but quite obvious.

√ Post 9/11 profiling

√ Suffering from the political fallout of events overseas.

√ Conversion caused me to be admitted to mental hospital by mother.

15. If you are a student or when you were a student, do/did you feel that there are/were specific needs due to you being Shi'a that are/were not met by the Muslim Student Association of your school or university? ****

(8 respondents answered this question)

I think we needed to have spent as much money and time educating other Muslims as the non-Muslims.
Some non-shi'a students condemned us for our beliefs and did not want to associate with us.

Greater understanding is needed between the groups

There was tension between the groups 20 years ago. We tried to discuss the differences, but for the most part, we kept our distances.

****Added comments

This question beckons the response of those who may have received the message of Imam (ra) or the Islamic Revolution through intellectual exploration/study/research. It seems to imply that MSA and the college atmosphere carries a greater responsibility to *dawah or tabligh* when in most instances MSA are ill equipped and fall quite short in servicing the majority population of Muslims (who are not students) and all too often have merely a cultural approach to Islam rather than effectively addressing the challenges and misunderstandings of Islam in a Western environment.

I am not currently a student but have contacts with some students involved in the MSA. I have heard that at some universities, the majority Sunni group does not allow the "torbah" in their prayer rooms. This is unfortunate and from what I hear, not common of all MSA groups but exist nonetheless.

There must be greater understanding between the groups. I do feel that progress has been made in his field as opposed to 20 years ago. I do feel that because of the progress made in this area, there are certain entities who are trying very hard to divide the Muslims. We all must do our best, whether in a work or academic environment, to enhance unity between fellow Muslims, insha'allah.

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